Build Mental Toughness & Perform Under Pressure | Dr. Lenny Wiersma

Perform with Dr. Andy Galpin · Episode 23 · April 15, 2026 · Transcript

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Dr. Andy Galpin
The science and practice of enhancing human performance for sport, play, and life. Welcome to Perform. I'm Dr. Andy Galpin. I am a professor and scientist and the executive director of the Human Performance Center at Parker University. Today, I'm speaking with Dr. Lenny Wiersma. Lenny is the director of sports and performance psychology for the Olympic sports teams at the University of California Berkeley. And today you're gonna learn a number of tactics and tools to help you perform at your best mentally. Lenny does an excellent job of breaking down what we now understand scientifically about confidence and how to better use self-talk. You're also gonna learn a lot about visualization. What is it? How does it work? And specifically, exactly what to do to get the most impact out of it. With all that said, I hope you enjoy today's conversation with Dr. Lenny Wiersma. Dr. Lenny Wiersma.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Andy.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I actually wanted to start in a place of recency. A few days ago, w- the whole world watched Alex Honnold climb up a skyscraper, and this hurts my entire soul to say this, but the entire time watching that, I kept thinking, "This is obviously fairly easy for him physically." There was some challenges, but that was by far, and again, this is gonna really hurt me saying this- ... this is a psychological challenge. Just at the very basic start here, what does psychology, what does the brain, how does this even look when someone is doing something as crazy as Alex climbing up a building like that? Where do we even start to think about this?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I've never worked with Alex. Alex is a special person. For, so people who aren't him, like you and I, to try to even have a sense of what that's like for him is impossible to do. It's a great example of we're all seeing the same things, but we're all seeing very different things and feeling different things. I've worked with athletes who do extreme things, and I have some insight perhaps into maybe what some of that was like for him. Um, I mean, the first thing, it- my nephews are reaching out, "Hey, what do you think? Is it gonna be like, it's a 10-second delay. Is that gonna

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be needed?" And, like, no. Like, one thing I've learned about extreme sport athletes is that if it's not a 100% yes, then it's a 100% no. And, like, this is important to understand, like, the risk involved with it, 'cause I think at the heart of doing these things is the concept of the psychology of risk. For all of us, the consequence of what he had is the same, a mistake, um, him being overconfident, an earthquake, wind, like, things in his control, things out of our control. For everybody, the consequence is the same. It's sure death.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, gone.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
But the risk is very different because he's not gonna do that, he's not gonna go into doing that if he has doubt in his mind about his ability to do it. And actually, I think that's pretty phenomenal to know what it took for him to buy that kind of confidence, to build that kind of confidence over time. I remember when he did El Cap. He spent, to my understanding, an entire year doing a stretching routine so that he can do a move with his leg that probably lasts about three seconds. I wish I had something in my life that I'd be willing to dedicate a year for a three-second thing. And most, most humans actually probably have some capability of doing great things, but how many of us are really willing to put that kind of, like, all-in investment in? So those little things, those little details in his, the way he's approached doing everything is, probably explains a lot. To me, what I find fascinating is you see all these, the footage of the people who are inside those windows of that building.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And he's standing outside there, you know, no safety net or anything. And just his ability to, to focus, and part of me was thinking, like, "Why didn't they shut that building down?" Like, do these-

Dr. Andy Galpin
I thought the same thing. I was stunned

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... do these people know there are cell phones in his face through this window and they're waving, and they're, do they know how dangerous that is for him-

Dr. Andy Galpin
The distraction alone, right?

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... to try to distract him? And yet he has probably a superhuman level of focus to be able to know when he needs to engage and interact and know where he needs to put his focus. Um, so, you know, when you, when you look at that performance, that was a performance of a lifetime in my mind.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Sure.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And how eloquently and how composed he did that, and it, there were times where it actually looked like he was having fun doing it, like taking it in, standing at the ledge, looking down. Like, that amount of joy that that brought him probably is the, I'm guessing one of the big motivational forces for him to do that. But that, that ability to know 100% that he's gonna pull that off and go into it was the deciding factor, which makes it even more interesting in my mind. I think we might want to know, oh, he might fall. I don't think he ever thought he was ever gonna fall on that thing. I think it's interesting to study the extreme sort of sport thing because even though most of us don't aspire to do those things, we can all learn certain aspects about how they approach it and how they're going about it piece of it. The misnomer about Alex Honnold is that he doesn't feel fear.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Please walk the world through this. I, uh, this seems to be, of course-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, so he goes into FMRI, and he's shown pictures of things that would trigger most people, and he has what's referred to as depressed amygdala function, meaning his, his brain isn't responding with the intensity, therefore, he's not afraid of what he does.

Dr. Andy Galpin
He doesn't feel fear. He biologically has no ability to, or a dampened ability to sense, feel fear. Therefore, these things are not hard for him cognitively.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It totally minimizes and dehumanizes what he, what he does.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's also not academically true.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
No, I know. It's-

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, it's not true

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... crazy. That was interesting. I've been a little bit out of the extreme sport world in quite a bit of time, and to be able to experience that from afar was actually really fun for me to do.

Dr. Andy Galpin
In your academic background, you're, as a scientist in this field as well as a clinician, you mentioned it briefly, but in case folks glossed over that, you continue to work with some of the world's best athletes.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You've worked with extreme sport athletes. Uh, I think your, I think it was your first sabbatical where you looked at the surfers.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Big wave surfers.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Again, I can't think of a better person to have this conversation with because while no one can play armchair psychologist-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... right? We certainly can say, what other lessons have you learned, again, in the research? What have you published or other scientists? And then again, what have you seen in that extreme? So kind of continuing on this theme, I would love to hear your insights on those folks you have worked with, people that have jumped off of helicopters on big mountains and skied the whole thing down. Are they the same as Alex is supposedly? True or not, let's just say it's true. Who cares?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Do they not feel fear? Like, how does it actually happen when someone can do something as risk-tolerant or intolerant as this? What the hell is actually happening to these people? 'Cause I

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could never do that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
There's no chance. I don't think I could. I don't... Can you train that? Maybe this is the question.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Is that a trainable skill, or is Alex born that way? Are these people that surf Maverick, is that natural to them, or is that something they trained into?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
One of the things that struck me about working with that population is, you know, the work that I do, I'm supposed to be an expert in, you know, mental skill and mental performance, and-

Dr. Andy Galpin
This feels good for me to hear you say.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I should be an expert.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Supposedly. Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Virtually none of those individuals who do that work with someone like me. They put hours and hours and hours into building it. I don't believe that anyone's born to be able to do what they do. I think they start small, they make a lot of mistakes, they learn from the best, the commitment to them being experts at what they do. I did a study in which, um, I interviewed people who do these very extreme backcountry skiing and snowboarding, but they stopped taking the helicopters, and they climbed. So now they have two aspects of it. They have the ascent-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... which is dangerous in and of itself, and they have the descent, which is dangerous in and of itself.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
As well as now you're really tired.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You're doing that descent when you're exhausted already-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep

Dr. Andy Galpin
... because you climbed a mountain.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
They probably know as much about weather, and big wave surfers know as much about oceanography as the people who have multiple PhDs who study those things. Like, that's the dedication that they, that they took to get to the level of studying the craft and, and doing what they do. Um, so not only have they not done any formal training, most of them, and the mental side of it, I think it's just they, they have a desire to do it. I think one of the big mis- misnomers is the risk piece. I think a lot of people assume that the thrill-seeking is a big motivation for doing it, and it's v- very rarely why someone does these things is for the thrill of it. As a matter of fact, I mean, imagine being in a, in a airplane and having extreme turbulence. Who likes that? Who wants that? Who thinks, "Oh, this is why I wanna fly, so I can experience thoughts that I might die"? I don't think any of them have that, or they probably wouldn't be doing it in the first place. And when I f- when I first started to kinda figure out the motivation behind some of these individuals, I think that was an assumption, and I didn't bring that in, but I think a lot of people, "Oh, they do it for the thrill-seeking. They do it for the risk-taking piece." And surprisingly, it's not that simple, and that's actually not why most of them do it. I think if you or I have a talent, and we have a skill, and it's something that we absolutely love to do, and we have a passion for it, that's a driving force, not the notion that we may fail doing it, and we may suffer these big consequences as a result of it. So that piece of it and, and being really aware, the confidence piece is a dangerous thing. The confidence piece, uh, for a basketball player shooting free throws is a dangerous thing. Imagine the confidence piece for someone who, who overthinks their ability in a moment and takes risks. As a matter of fact, the approach that we might take in a traditional sport setting with, like, being in the zone, right? Oh, yeah, can't miss, so then keep going. Don't stop.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. Temperature checks, we call that, right?

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
If you ever think that you're in that state in one of those sports, you need to stop and get yourself out of that state, 'cause that's when you're gonna make a mistake. That's when you're gonna, you're gonna make that, that one more that you shouldn't have done that might cost you. And so they're really good at regulating that notion of, "Okay, I'm feeling too confident here." Most athletes don't ever say, "I'm feeling too confident right now." I think most athletes are like, they wanna get in that state. But extreme sport athletes, actually, that's a very dangerous place for them to be. So the confidence piece is very different in that world than I have seen in most traditional sports that, that I, I work with.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Is there a way to identify, are there tells when you're in that spot?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
When you're getting away with things that you shouldn't have gotten away with. So you're cutting corners before you're really ready to do it, and you knew, "Oh, I got away with that one," you're not gonna get away with the next one doing it. I think that's a big telltale, is they're honest with themselves about that one. Like, "Okay, I got lucky on that one. It's time for me to pull out." But it, but it looks like often in, in big wave surfing is they paddle back to the channel where there's no waves coming, so they can get themselves out of that, and they can kind of like, "Okay, where am I with things? Let me regulate. Let me get back to, like, feeling the energy of the ocean and stuff so I'm not just gonna jump on the next wave that I can find and see if I can top the last one I just did."

Dr. Andy Galpin
It felt like the, the crash was a big, the wipeout was a really big theme.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Why did that matter so much, and what were those elite surfers doing to mitigate that issue of the wipeout?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
They actually focused on what it would be like if it were to happen, and they prepared for what they were gonna do. They had a plan. Virtually everything that we have some fear over and we worry about something happening, if we can just say, "Okay, if that happens, what's my cl- plan gonna be?" And we believe in the plan. That's like a massive psychological safety net, and then that's what alleviates the fear. The fear, the fear will remain, but And so the amount of time they spend visualizing, they spend holding their breath, they spend becoming a lot more, um, flexible

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and knowing how to position themselves and, like, visualizing that and getting into, like, smaller instances of that, and that-Okay, if this happens to me, this is how I'm gonna handle it. This is, this is how I'm gonna, I'm gonna survive it. Once they have that down, then I think that it becomes less about the wipeout and more about the, the performance on the wave itself, perhaps. But that, that part absolutely has to happen first.

Dr. Andy Galpin
The presenting sponsor of this podcast is Momentous. Momentous makes the highest quality supplements on the market, period. I literally spent years vetting their products, company, and leadership team before officially partnering with them in two thousand and twenty-three. Every single one of Momentous' products is third-party tested to ensure quality, and many are even NSF certified for sport. Now, while I love all their products, I'm incredibly excited about their new Fiber+ Prebiotic. Almost everyone is seeking more energy, improved recovery, and better performance, but most people are missing a key foundation to their overall health, and that's getting enough good fiber. In fact, ninety-five percent of Americans are failing to hit the recommended daily amount of fiber. Fiber powers gut health, which we know drives long-term performance. Proper gut health allows for better nutrient absorption, energy stability, recovery, inflammation control, and much more. I personally simply mix a scoop of their cinnamon flavor in some water every night, and by doing so, I make sure I'm covering any gaps I might have in my daily fiber intake that I try to get through eating a balanced whole food diet. If you'd like to try Fiber+ or any of Momentous' best-in-class supplements, just go to livemomentous.com/galpin and use the code GALPIN for up to thirty-five percent off your first order. Again, that's livemomentous.com/galpin and use the code GALPIN for up to thirty-five percent off your first order. People will s- describe this idea differently, but this is, you run fear to the end.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What if? What if it actually happened, right? And then actually live in that moment. I'd love for you to share more about the visualization piece because I caught that just now as you said it, and I have always personally just thought of visualization as almost u- using your brain to practice the good stuff. I'm just realizing as you said that I don't actually know if I've spent that much time thinking about the visualization from the-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... negative side. So the two-part question is, what really is that visualization of the second part?

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The second question here to that is, in general, what are people doing maybe wrong with visualization? How, how can they do it better?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
For the duration of the time I've been in this field, thirty years, of all the mental skills that have been researched to be effective, visualization seems to be the one that keeps coming out on top. And so I've, you know, suggested it, I've worked with athletes on it, but it really actually hasn't been until more recently that I've really, really truly understood how powerful it can be. So it starts with the why, to your point of like visualizing the things you do well. There's very distinct uses of visualization. So you can visualize for confidence, and in that, th- if that's the case, you wanna see yourself in moments where you're doing well. And when athletes are going for the first time in an Olympic Games or a world championship or an NCAA championship, I always say to them like, "Imagine when you were a kid in your backyard and you were pretending like you were taking the two free throws to win the game, or you're at the baseball field pretending like you were the person at bat when it's bottom of the ninth inning, bases loaded, two outs." Like you've always wanted to be in that moment. And so like visualizing yourself so that you can build that confidence I think is traditionally one of the things that most people have used visualization for. Visualization can be for coping. Actually, some of the best uses of visualization is coping visualization, meaning you imagine what might go wrong and you imagine what you will do in that moment. When I work with teams, I usually, I'll say never, reference the Navy SEALs.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That's-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Because no one's gonna be a Navy SEAL and I, I, I don't like reading books where they reference the Navy SEALs. It's just-

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's like a chef cooking with bacon.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's just

Dr. Andy Galpin
Like a true chef is like, "No. I'm not gonna use it. I'm not gonna use it. It's a gimmick."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
No, and it's like why? Nor, and I work with swimmers, I've been working with swimming a long time, will I use Michael Phelps as an example, 'cause another, for another reason, like no one's gonna be Michael Phelps, so. However, you have to use Michael Phelps when it comes to visualization because that moment in the Beijing Olympics where his goggles fill up with water

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and he had eight gold medals riding on the line-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Before you keep going, can you actually like, actually tell that story 'cause it is, it's remarkable.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Just a little bit of context on that story. I don't want to-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Two thousand and eight, Michael Phelps is slated to swim eight events. The previous gold medal record was seven, set by Mark Spitz in nineteen seventy-two, and the big question of could Michael Phelps break that record. His final event was the two hundred butterfly, and he dove in the water and his goggles had, um, come off of his face and they filled with water when they kind of reset themselves. And so he swam, um, seven out of eight laps blind. And there's some lore about like what allowed him to prepare for that moment. Um, there are stories of his coach, Bob Bowman, early in his career where he would remove his goggles and not allow him to swim with his goggles at a big race so that he could, you know, be in that moment where, okay, what if this happens? And he would visualize over and over again and count his strokes and so he knew exactly what he needed to do. He'd have to see it. He had done it so many times. He talks about like his cap ripping and he can't wear someone else's cap 'cause it has, has-- he can't use someone's, so he's gotta turn it inside out and that wherewithal of being able to like think through that in the most stressful, he visualizes those things happening. So coping visualization is a really powerful one where we see ourselves in situations where we imagine what might happen and then you learn.And practice coping techniques and tools so that when you're in that situation, you've seen yourself and you've seen yourself doing it the right way. So that's, that's a huge part of visualization is the coping piece. Familiarization, so if you haven't yet done something and you're going to be in that, in that moment, you wanna see yourself in advance for that. So if I were work with a swimmer, I'll tell them, "Get to the pool, locate the ready room," which is where they sit, all eight athletes of the final before they get marched out, and practice walking and how long is the walk gonna be and where are the lights gonna be and now imagine that. If I were to be, you know, nervous or afraid of being in a podcast, I would've come to this room without you knowing, and I would've looked in here and I would've seen this setup, and then I would've went outside for a little bit and I would've imagined myself there without me being there. So it starts with the why, um, with the visualization piece first. And then what you visualize has to be based on what it is that you wanna get out of it. Is it to learn something that you haven't done before? Is it to modify something? I work t- with tennis players. They've literally taken millions of swings before they've come to college, and then they have to make a technical

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adjustment, and that has to, not reverse, but, like, they're starting over basically as novices. Imagine having something that you do such a habit of and then having to make a technical adjustment. So the visualization with that f- would be to increase the mental reps of them doing it the right way. And so that would be a different form of visualization. Um, massive tool. Uh, d- generally speaking, I'd, I'd, I don't want people doing visualization before they go to bed. I can't count the number of athletes where they'll be in their hotel room the night before a competition and they wanna visualize that before they go to sleep, and now they're not sleeping for the next two hours because if they did it right- ... they're not gonna be able to sleep.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Uh-huh.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Their brain's engaged. They-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Too aroused, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You always wanna have emotion as part of the visualization. Like, that emotional piece is maybe more important than the visual piece of it. And so, like, you don't wanna do it there. Visualization does not have to take a long time. The most powerful things to visualize are short, repeatable things that you can see over and over again. You can see it in different ways, and I think that's a big part of it. So, you know, most people, if they're gonna visualize something, they wanna sit down for a moment first and say, "Okay, not just close your eyes and take a couple deep breaths and visualize." You need to know, okay, what do I wanna get out of it? Those things I listed before. What do I want the visualization to do? And then based on that, what are a couple things that I wanna visualize for this one session alone? Um, so those are s- those are some of the, the big things, is feeling what it's gonna feel like. Athletes move, and so they have to feel. I've been doing a lot more with using equipment or clothing while they visualize. It's gonna sound really bizarre, but-

Dr. Andy Galpin
The whole field is, so go ahead

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... a goalkeeper's gonna have their goalkeeper gloves when they visualize, or a-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Interesting

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... surfer's gonna be lying on their surfboard when they visualize because you're smelling wax. Sense of smell is such a powerful scent, and now you smell your wax when you're doing it, and that brings emotions that you get a sense of anxiousness and nervousness and excitement with that. Should you put your wetsuit on first and then lie on your surfboard to do it? Yes. There's some evidence that the closer you can get, and there's also a little bit of evidence, although it's a little bit s- sketchy, where we associate certain emotions with the clothing or uniforms that we wear. And so, like, that's another added component where if you can at all, I've mentioned swimming a couple times, have your tech suit on, have your goggles on, have your cap on when you're doing it, you're feeling what you might feel in the moment.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I have several follow-ups to that. Um, just real quick, when you say it doesn't have to be long, are these 25-minute sessions? Uh, give me a rough idea of, of generally how long you're thinking about a visualization session should be in terms of minutes.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I work with athletes whose time is of the essence, and if they can give me full focus, 10 minutes of visualization, I think that's a huge win.

Dr. Andy Galpin
10 minutes daily?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
10 minutes.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Twice a day, once a day?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Um, depends on how much time they have. I think more is better.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yep.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
But and I think we all should, also should put in context a little bit the athletes I work with today mostly. I'm at, um, Cal Berkeley. I work, um, in our athletics department. I work with eight of our teams at Cal. That's my primary full-time job. I'm still working with professional athletes on the side, but, like, my day-to-day work is with these student athletes.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Given the fact that you're at Berkeley, not football, that probably means you're dealing with a

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level of athletes that are not only Division I-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... but they're usually very highly ranked nationally, right? Your swim teams, your water polos, like, this is a very good sport at Berkeley.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I work mostly with our Olympic sports.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Which are very good in B- at Berkeley, uh, generally, most of the time.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I think in Paris 2024 Games, we had 54 current or former Cal Bears, and if you look at their medal totals, they would've been in the top 10 of countries.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That, that's a better way to frame it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
This is a, a high level athletes.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Very high level.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And yet they are also attending classes at Cal Berkeley, one of the premier academic institutions in the world. And so for me to ask them to take 10 minutes a day is a big ask, and I will not ask them to do it if I didn't believe that it was gonna be a good investment for them.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So is that a, a general rule you want most of your people doing around, if, if you can, 10 minutes of visualization? Is that a pretty standard protocol for you guys?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. As you get into closer competitive, like NCAAs for our divers or, you know, NCAAs for tennis or something, then probably wanna ramp it up a little bit as you go into that, into the maybe a couple weeks out of it. But I mean, if you really do it right and do it well, if you can give yourself 10 minutes of visualization, I think it, it could change your entire performance.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Could you give me an example or a little bit of an understanding of how a non-athletecould or would want to use visualization like this? If I can say, "Okay, ten minutes a day, I'll give you that," but why would I even care about it? Or is this only for those trying to win?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Anything that we have to do to perform. You know, the field of sports psychology is more being referred to as performance psychology today because we've morphed into realms that were outside of the traditional sports setting, so performing arts and medicine and military. And so if you're taking an exam and you typically get really nervous before your exams, visualize yourself sitting at your desk before you receive the exam. What are you doing to cope with that? What do you do in the... If you're still doing it in person, what are you doing when the professor comes over and hands out the exams? What kind of breathing are you doing the first time you read over the first couple questions? What are you saying to yourself? How are you regulating yourself? If you're, if you have to do a, a presentation to a group at work and there's funding on the line for it, then you wanna visualize what that performance might look like for you. One of the most nervous, at the most nervous time I've ever been in my life, I had to, uh, officiate a wedding, over 200 people, in sign language. And the bride was deaf. This is going back 30 years. And there was a young girl on the team who was deaf, and she went from knowing me without knowing sign language one year to me coming home fluent in sign language. And then she reached out some 15 years after she had done, and she asked if I would officiate her wedding in sign language. And that was a massive, like, honor to do that.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Of course.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
But I did not wanna mess that up. So now I'm nervous. I'm in Long, uh, Long Island. It's, like, 100 degrees outside. I'm wearing my suit. The amount of time I spent visualizing doing that performance in sign language was massive for me because it's like I'd al-already done it 100 times before I stood up to do it. So, so pick a scenario in your life where you have something coming up that there's something on the line for it, and ask yourself, "What might happen? What do I not wanna happen?" And see yourself cope through that if it happens. What's your plan? Seeing exactly what you wanna happen happen, how are you gonna feel when you do that? It's actually super, super powerful. And a great way of practicing this, so when you and I were chatting before this, we were talking a little bit about sleep, and one of the sleep tools right now that's a big sleep tool is sleep stories. And so we ruminate. We're lying in bed. We're thinking about tomorrow's competition. We're thinking about tomorrow's exam. We're thinking about tomorrow's job interview, and so our minds are racing. And so sleep stories are designed so that

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you can unhook from those thoughts, and you can give your, your mind to something else, and the reason why they're so powerful is they create a lot of detail. So now you're trying to visualize what that story is, and now that leads to cognitive fatigue, which is gonna make you fall asleep, and no- you're no longer thinking about those things. And so while I do not think I would visualize a performance before I go to sleep, I would definitely tap into sleep stories as a way of, like, practicing vivid visualization. 'Cause if you can imagine that train ride, that's... By the way, I think those are the most popular sleep stories are train stories. If you can practice imagining that with detail, then you can practice imagining that performance in front of your board of directors or in front of your eighth grade class or something.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's really funny you say that because many years ago, I started writing down sleep tips for the athletes that I was working with. And one of the ones that I would use all the time is if you wake up and you have a racing mind, I would always say the example I do is I go all the way back to 1995, and I try to remember the entire starting lineup of the Seattle Mariners. Right? 'Cause I'm like, that's a huge chunk of memory. And one of the mistakes people make here is they try to turn their brain off-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... when this is happening, right? And it does not work. I actually engage as hard as I possibly can in a non-stressful, when failure doesn't matter.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Because you actually induce that cognitive fatigue, and you're completely removing yourself from the thing that was probably keeping you awake. And I just started figuring out, I go back to sleep immediately, like, when this happens. And you fast-forward probably 10 years, and at Absolute Rest now, we use these sleep stories and similar tools constantly, and I'm like, "I nailed it." Like, I was so ahead of the research. Like, I figured this thing out. And there's a... It's really interesting how people do not associate the difference between turning your brain off-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... and just turning it in a different direction, right? And so you don't want to-- If you lay there the entire time trying to think, "Turn off brain," like, well, just, just expect to lay there for a long time

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telling your brain to turn it... It's just not gonna work.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
The term that's used for that is unhooking.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Interesting.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I know some of you are listening to this right now, but imagine a hook in something and, and it's, it's not gonna let go of it. That's what rumination is. That's when we get into something in our mind that we can't let go of until we give it something else to then be thinking about. That's what that did for you-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... is to, is to go and just think about something entirely different or what the sleep stories are designed to do. Um, so at any rate, I know we're gonna go on a lot of these long tangents. Back to the visualization piece, I just think it's such a, a, a powerful tool, and trying to play with, like, techniques like using equipment or clothing or, um, you know, uniforms or something to make it a little bit more real.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I have some, some questions about that tactic, but before we get there, I wanna know w- if I'm doing some visualization, do you have a rough sense of how often I should visualize what I'm just gonna call the performance itself? So my technique, my strategy, the stuff I'm going to do, right? I'm gonna hit this part of my pitch, and then I'm gonna hit that part of the pitch, and then I'm gonna get to that part of the story, whatever. The things I'm trying to do and just remembering my own, you know, technique versus, uh, I forget how you called it, but the, the fear part of it. It's like, well, what if? What if goes wrong? How much time should I spend on the front side versus the back side or the performance side versus the failure?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Going into a session where you're gonna be visualizing something very difficult, I would always start with what's easy and what you already have confidence in first. Like if I, if I meet with a team, "How many of you visualize you doing something really well?" About half the team kind of raises their hand. "And what are the rest of you thinking about?" "Oh, the things I keep messing up."

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, yeah, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Definitely don't wanna see yourself failing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Some of this is not even visualizing the performance itself, and some of it's visualizing the lead-up to the performance and what's your, your routine and what are you eating the morning of, and what do you, what do you do when you get dressed. And so some of it's not even the performance itself, it's just the, the lead-up to it. Some of it is just a very s-small aspect of the performance that you just really wanna nail.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's like, like, "It's all gonna come down to this right here, and I really need to see myself doing that the right way and feeling it the right way over and over and over again." And then if you have the time, you can sort of link all those things maybe start to finish a little bit together.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Today's episode is sponsored by Eight Sleep. Eight Sleep makes smart mattress covers with cooling, heating, sleep tracking, and more. I've personally been sleeping on an Eight Sleep mattress for more than three years now, and it's absolutely glorious. I love it so much that I hate traveling away from home because I can't sleep on my Eight Sleep Pod 5. As you'll hear me talk about endlessly on this podcast, there's really nothing you can do that makes more of an impact on your health and performance than getting a great night of sleep. And getting great sleep requires having your body temperature drop a couple of degrees at night, and that's hard to do on your own. The Eight Sleep has been a game changer for me because I run hot at night, or as my wife calls it, I'm a furnace. If I don't have something like an Eight Sleep helping me cool down, I'll wake up in the middle of the night overheating and not feeling great. This is something I've also found in many people that I coach, especially those who are really physically active. The Pod 5 is the latest generation of the Eight Sleep mattress covers, and it can go on any mattress, heats or cools each side of the bed from fifty-five to a hundred and ten degrees Fahrenheit, and provides high fidelity sleep tracking. If you'd like to try Eight Sleep, go to eightsleep.com/perform and use the code PERFORM to save up to three hundred and fifty dollars off your Pod 5 Ultra. You get thirty days to try it at home and return it if you don't love it.

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But I'm confident that you will. I certainly love mine and would never consider returning it. Eight Sleep currently ships to the US, Canada, the UK, and select countries in the EU, and even Australia. Again, that's eightsleep.com/perform, and use the code PERFORM to save up to three hundred and fifty dollars. When you talked earlier about thinking about what can go wrong, how do you balance that with putting yourself in too much negative self-talk, right? So if I'm always sitting there thinking about all the things that go wrong, am I actually just harming my own confidence? Am I walking in and anticipating failure? How do I know if I'm there, and, and what does that process look like?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
A really powerful way of doing it is to go back to something that you just failed at, and then kind of recreate it again. As soon as you can after, not immediately after because you're too emotional, but you know, somebody who, who dropped a really, really close match that they should've won, for example, or really had a bad performance. So go back, and then try as much as possible to think about what you were thinking about when that was happening. What were you trying to do to cope? What was your self-talk? What type of thoughts did you have? And now we can get a sense of do those help you or do they hurt you? It's not about it being negative self-talk. It's about whether it is helping you or hurting you. So you start with that first. Like go back, what was that thought process? What was that like for you? Okay, now let's do it differently. And now, so what you're doing is you are not hiding behind the fact that this occurred or that it might happen again, but you're capitalizing on the fact that you've done it one time, and now what was-- what would you do differently this time around? There's nothing wrong actually with seeing yourself failing something as long as you're turning that into a better result next time it happens. Okay? So if you've been through it one time, recreate it as closely as possible. Be super aware of what you're doing, what you were saying, what you were thinking, how you were breathing. Try to recreate that. Okay, now let's make adjustments to that, and it almost writes itself.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
They usually don't need me for that piece of it, although it might help. I do, I do ask athletes a lot, like when you perform your best, typically, let's, let's write down a couple performances that you've done fairly recently that you've done really well. Now let's go back. Let's go back to the morning of. Let's go back to right before. Let's-- What were your behaviors? What were the things that you were thinking? And it's a great learning tool for them to be able to do that, and often they're thinking and doing things very differently than they were in moments in which they had a really poor performance sitting right there in front of them. So we wanna tap into that, and

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every single person, performer is different. And so it's like that's one of the first things I do if I work with an athlete or a team is I just always come from the fact that I've done this for a long time. And the most successful people I've worked with all do it differently. And if this, this super elite athlete says one negative thing to herself, then she's gonna spiral the rest of the time, and this athlete over here, if they try to be positive with themselves and be a little bit forgiving for themselves, it spirals them in the opposite direction. So like we have to really, really study what makes us our best, and it's different for absolutely everybody. The negative thinking part can be a dangerous thing for a lot of people who have been taught that you shouldn't think negatively. And I think most people need to be a little bit more forgiving in, in performance spaces because the amount of pressure people put on themselves and the perfectionism that comes with elite performance is very, very strong. So yes, if I'm gonna err on the side of one or the other, it's like, okay, be a little more forgiving of yourself. However, there are times where negative self-talk is actually gonna be the thing that's gonna get you out of this state of darkness.We can get a lot into the self-talk piece. I think it's one of the another most powerful tool, and I think it's more powerful than visualization in the context of in the moment that we're doing it, because that's what you're thinking of in that moment.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. I mean, I guess it's fair to say visualization is probably something you're gonna do pre and post.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That you gotta stop and think through. I mean-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Golfers can before their shot.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Of course.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Free throw, you know, basketball players can do it before they take their... If it's a self-initiated tac yeah, task, yes, but-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Well, you'll see this in golf every single shot.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Uh, you'll... In fact, if you pay attention to caddies, really common thing for a caddy to say is, "Okay, see it. Okay, feel it. You got the feeling?" Like, they won't even ask, very rarely do they say things like, "Oh, you're at 97 meters. We gotta, you know, pitch it over." It's usually like, "What's the shot? Yeah, we're gonna... You feel it? Do you see it?" "Nah, like, it's not feeling right." And they have him walk back to the ball, readdress it. "Okay, now I see the shot." And then they walk away.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Caddies are really good about stopping talking. Once they feel like they have the feeling of it, then they just shut up and walk away.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
This is one thing that I have seen you, uh, talk about a lot as well, is this coaching idea. So you've given us, I think, some great tools on visualization, but I would love to hear more on this self-talk right now. And then I would love to get into this difference between literally self-talk versus coaching, right? So I'm either coaching or leading somebody else. How do I communicate with them to put them in the right spot? But let's start with the self. What other things should we be paying attention to with that self-talk? How do I know if I'm doing too much negative self-talk or-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... too much positive? What does that all mean, and how do we do it?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
First thing I'm gonna say is we should not be distinguishing categories of positive versus negative.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Amazing.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It should be whether it's-

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Dr. Andy Galpin
I screwed it up right out the gates

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... it should be whether it's effective or not effective. That's the big thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Ah, because it can be negative but effective.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And positive but ineffective.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Perfect.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So it's not about negative or positive. We'll take that off the table. It's this is effective for you or not effective for you. If you and I were to start, I would ask you to write down the names of two or three people in your life who you really admire, you really trust, you know they've got your back. They could look you in the eye and say anything to you, and you know it's coming from a place of they want me to do well. Two out of those three are people you should know personally. One could be someone you so look up to in a field because of what they've accomplished that you just have that much admiration and respect for what they've done. So I would start with, okay, let's identify two or three people who would be those individuals for you. I think it's really important first to start with those two or three people. And then I'm gonna ask you to think about w- a scenario that you might find yourself in that one of your best friends might be in. So something that you might find yourself in but have someone else in that scenario, and they're struggling or they're stressed about it or they're feeling anxious about or they're worried about it. What would you say to them? What would you say to them? So one of the most powerful aspects of self-talk is psychological distancing. Psychological distancing is when we're in that moment emotionally, and we wanna create some distance from that. And the place from which we're talking or listening to ourselves in our mind, we can create some distance, and that usually comes with it being a lot more effective, psychological distancing. So you've got first-person self-talk, which is I. There's second-person self-talk, which is you or your name. And then you've got third-person self-talk, which is a whole other person. And one thing that we found to be super effective is to come out of a place of the first-person self-talk at least to a place of talking to

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yourself. Andy, when you said the difference between self-talk and coaching, that's what came to my mind, is you actually... They're the same thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Interesting.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You should be coaching yourself.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I get it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's the same. That's what your self-talk ought to be. Most of us actually are probably really, really good at your best friend's dealing with something. We know exactly what to say. Why? 'Cause we're not in the emotion of it. And if we can practice self-talk tools that distance ourself from the I and what I'm feeling to the you, it can be a very, very, very powerful thing. If you go back to the names that you wrote down on the piece of paper, and I want listeners to maybe pause for a moment, and if you were to write down the list of two or three people who are really, really powerful in your life, and then if you're in a situation that's bringing you stress or something, imagine what one of those individuals would say to you, and imagine it in their voice and them using your name to say it. It could be massively, massively powerful. That's the greatest psychological distance that we can get. Number one, it comes from not in a place of emotion, but number two, it comes from a authority who we trust and who we believe in. That person can be with you up on that building if it's Alex Honnold or that surfboard if it's a big wave surfer or that baseball pitcher who just, you know, walked the last three batters and thinks he's about to get pulled. Like, imagine going to that person in your mind. The self-talk piece is so, so powerful. There's some evidence that what we're thinking is a bigger predictor of our confidence than anything else. What we're thinking in the moment is a bigger predictor of confidence than any other thing that could have brought us confidence. There's some evidence that what we're thinking in the moment is a bigger predictor of our happiness than any other factor, money in the bank, who we're with. It's powerful, those, those type of thoughts. SoDo a lot of work first reflecting on when we're in our performance environments, what are the type of things that we say to ourself, and not as a positive or negative. But does that help me? Does that hurt me, and why? A lot of reflection of that, and then learning some of these tools where we can start to separate ourselves from our own voice and bring in either coaching ourselves or talking to ourselves. If you have a nickname for yourself, use that nickname. I've been ... My nickname has been Lundog since I was a kid. Everywhere I've ever moved to, people have called me Lundog without knowing that the other groups of people in my life have said that. So if I'm stressed, I'm gonna refer to myself as Lundog in my mind because it, it actually really focuses

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me, and it really gets me super, like, "Oh, yeah, that's right, I'm Lundog."

Dr. Andy Galpin
That was an incredible, incredible tip. I can tell you right now, I'm gonna start using that. I am someone, and it doesn't matter that it's about me, but I am someone who really enjoys, w- well, I'll just call negative feedback at this point. Actually, it doesn't really get me emotionally in the wrong spot. It's a very positive thing. Like, I, I really enjoy breaking down my own stuff.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So it's effective feedback.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Super effective. But I've never thought about using that second person approach, which, uh, again, I'll tell you right now that I'm gonna do that. That, that's incredible. I'm gonna start using that coaching-wise as well. Is it because it allows you to detach a little bit from the situation, and it's no longer about you and you and self-worth or anything like that, it is simply an objective assessment of what needs to happen, so it, it isn't as hard to take? Is that, is that a fair, kinda Andy way to say that?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, the, the first person is very reactive.

Dr. Andy Galpin
See how, see how I said Andy right there, by the way?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, yeah, that -

Dr. Andy Galpin
See?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Already working.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Do you have a nickname? That would've been even better.

Dr. Andy Galpin
No, uh, Andy would be good. You ask my daughter, you'll get a different answer and ...

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So part of it is because if we are just letting thoughts come passively, which is what happens, a lot of our thoughts are very passive, reactive, emotional thoughts. Most of those fall under the category of ineffective. Whether they're positive or negative, they, they probably do. So bringing that distance perspective, that self-talk perspective, re- reduces some of the emotion associated with. Also, if I'm the, the person dealing with something and you have an opportunity to say something to me, you're not gonna beat me up over it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You're not gonna say anything that you think the intention is to make me any worse or feel worse about what ... So we're actually really good about doing that. The exercise of writing down the names first, number one. Number two, I did this in a class recently at Berkeley. I had a chance to be in the classroom for the first time in a long time.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, you're retired, for the record, people.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, I'm retired. And it was in a class not f- it was an entrepreneur class, and I would ask these students at Cal, like, "Think of scenarios that you find yourself in over the course of a semester that are very challenging for you. Now, write down the name of a, of a really good friend who you also know are in those scenarios, so a teammate or a whatever. And then when they're in it and they shoot you a text and they express the negative emotion they're feeling, what's your response to them?" You know exactly what you need to say, so use that with yourself a lot more often. Very, very powerful tool. If you're looking for a good reference on it, Ethan Kross, he's at University of Michigan, he's wrote a book called Chatter. And it's one of the books that I loan out to athletes a lot. I usually don't loan out books. For some context, at Fullerton, before I retired from Fullerton, I had a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf full of books, and when I moved, I donated a lot to the lab, and I gave a lot away, but I only brought the books I really wanted to keep. And then in my office, I have very little space. I have two small rows of books, so anything in that bookshelf-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Precious real estate.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. Chatter is one of them.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Amazing.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And I have two copies of the same book, The Inner Game of Tennis, written by Timothy Gallwey in 1977. It was the first book I ever read that was anything having to do with sports psych. It's remarkable. I have the original and I have the updated version of it, so anyway, veering off on a little tangent.

Dr. Andy Galpin
No, great.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
But Chatter is one of those books that give really good insight and, and sort of, like, exercises on how to hone that craft of self-talk.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Great. That's, uh, amazing. Thank you for that resource. Um, is there any evidence, scientific evidence, or have you just seen it from your practical experience, on when people use that second person approach, do they tend to be gentler on themself? Uh, do they tend to be more fair? I, I'm only saying this because in the sense that when you talk to yourself, sometimes there is ineffective and negative-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... self-talk, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
But when you switch, is, is that lightened a little bit? Does that tend to be more s- uh, effective in the sense because we're not making it about ourselves, per se, as in, like, you're a bad or p- person, it's more about the task at hand? Or has that not been shown?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It will be a lot more forgiving. It will be a lot more from the place of you're fine, you're, you're making this worse than it really is. It can actually be more forceful in some ways, but, like-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... "Andy, that's not the Andy I used to know. You're so much tougher than that, Andy. Come on, dude, you, I, I know you. I know you. You're gonna get through this. You're gonna be fine. So sit up a little straighter," and you know, that, it could be actually a little bit more forceful. Very powerful, and it, it, again, comes from a place of positive intent. There's actually been a lot of research on these different self-talk perspectives, and that, that distance self-talk perspective virtually always comes out as a more effective way of communicating with ourselves.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Is that second person talk something one would do before the event, or, uh, best in the event, after, or all three?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's in the moment.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's, it's usually most powerful when you're in the moment of what it is that you're doing. Instead of measuring heart rate, I would've loved to somehow measure what Alex Honnold was saying to himself on that thing, if we're gonna refer back to that. Like, that internal dialogue that he had, I don't know if anybody could guess what it would've been like, but it's the most fascinating thing. If I could get a transcript-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... of his thoughts.And then could we learn how to use that same tool with ourselves? That to me is just would be amazing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Well, maybe Lenny, he's just gotten really comfortable being uncomfortable.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh. Is this the time for a break? I think we should break now- ... 'cause I'm gonna go break something.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I warned you I was gonna go here, and I, I had to go here, so.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You and I are so much more on the same page than you ever thought you ever would be.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Don't you dare accuse me of that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
The-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Don't you dare

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... phrase being comfortable being uncomfortable is, oh, my goodness, I don't even know where to start with that. And I have to be careful because actually a lot of trusted colleagues of mine use it regularly. And while I might joke with them about, like, it's impossible-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Semantically, it's impossible

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... it's impossible. No, be warm when you're cold. No, I'm cold. No, be warm. I'm cold. Be comfortable. And I get the larger sense of it is, like, try to be less uncomfortable. That's the thing. Try to be less uncomfortable. That's really what the phrase should be. But-

Dr. Andy Galpin
If you're listening at home, this is what academics do.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
We, we, we-

Dr. Andy Galpin
This is what we do with our time.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Most of research is this. But-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's right. You actually should embrace being more uncomfortable and not wanna be comfortable. That's the secret to success. That, that's just what it comes down to. Like, forget about being comfortable. It's not gonna happen. You don't want it to happen. Let's not make that

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a thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
My friend Ken Ridout has a book coming out, and I think the title of it is, uh, Everything You Want Is on the Other Side of Hard.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I actually, I just got a copy. I haven't read it yet, but it sounds like a similar kind of approach where very much Ken's, I'll say, life philosophy for Ken is just, like, get rid of this idea of, of being comfortable. It works for Ken. But I got a feeling most people are like, "What? I'm not doing that," right? What's realistic for people to take out of an idea, like, get rid of the idea of being comfortable? Like, what's realistic of this?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I work with endurance athletes a lot, and they often bring up how something hurts, and obviously, I mean, that's the nature of what they do, and they wanna be comfortable. Or some... And it's like, okay, number one, you can't do that. I think of a 200 breaststroker who's swimming in that last push off the wall. Your lungs are on fire, but that's what you have to feel if you're gonna set the world record. Like, you're gonna set the world record comfortably, you're gonna qualify for NCAAs and C2As comfortably, take that off the, the table there. If we have an expectation that we should be something and we're not, that's what brings us stress. I wanna be comfortable, and I'm not, therefore I'm stressed. Well, it's not because you're uncomfortable. It's because you have this expectation that's not very realistic, and we have to let go of some of those things before... Actually, I'd be interested in reading that book. Everything... What, wasn't it Everything We Do Is on the Other Side of Hard? Is that-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I mean, since you and I both did this last time, we both made pretty big decisions in our life.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Uh-huh.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
In my life, stability has always been one of the most important things for me.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I love stability. I'm very predictable. I'm very habitual. I know exactly what I'm gonna have for breakfast in the morning. I know when I'm gonna have it. I know where I'm gonna... That's how I operate in my life. And when I made the decision to leave a tenured position at Fullerton to go into the unknown, it was the scariest thing I've ever freaking done, and yet it got me to a place that I've probably never been happier in my life. It's just a little bit of a kind of... I, I just reflect on that a lot. Like, had I, had I not had gone through that period of time, the, the absolute discomfort of letting go of a tenured position to go into something unknown, um, and I found myself, this is a total aside, but I found myself going from a tenured academic position to working in esports.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. I forgot that, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
16-year-old multimillionaires who don't care about performance psychology. They don't care about warming up before. They just wanna grind. So I went from a very traditional-

Dr. Andy Galpin
They just wanna Mountain Dew and-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... structured environment-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... to esports, and then six months after I was in this field leaving a job of 20-plus years with a tenured position, the whole industry tanks, and I found myself looking for a job in six months after I had a job forever. I would've had that job forever, and not one time did I ever regret that decision. Yet another time where it's like, I gotta figure out my life now. What the hell is that gonna look like for me? But you gotta bet on yourself. That's such a cliché thing, but I remember very specifically being in our, with our Rocket League team during scrims for world championship, and I knew after that competition was over, I was likely gonna be looking for another job, and I had no idea what it was gonna do. And the phrase I kept saying to myself, "Just freaking bet on yourself." And we mentioned earlier, and, and I don't know if you want to get into this confidence piece.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Like, and confidence versus belief. Um, confidence has been considered to be maybe the most important factor of success in performance settings, and certainly in sports settings is the confidence piece. The longer I've been in this field, it's the most complex piece as well. The confidence piece is fleeting. It changes sometimes moment to moment. If we rely on being confident to do well, we're screwed. Most of the time before we will all have done the greatest thing that we'll ever do in our life, the moment before, we likely were not that confident in our ability to do it. It's just such a wild thing, and throughout my career, I've been trying to land on, like, how do you address the confidence piece with athletes, all of whom have been told their whole lives, "You gotta be confident. Only the confident athletes win." Well, they don't feel like that most of the time. When you're, when you're at a level where you are the one of the best in the world and you gotta go up against the other best in the world, like, nothing about that feels, feels good. So I dis- I differentiate the notion of confidence, which I see as a very fleeting thing. It could change a lot with belief. Belief is a very foundational structured thing. When, when I say bet on yourself, that's beliefSo with, with athletes, I spend a lot of time trying to distinguishing do you believe versus do you feel confident?

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You're an outdoors person. Did you fish much growing up?

Dr. Andy Galpin
A little bit.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Imagine, let's imagine you, you loved to fish, and there was a, like a lake somewhere that you lived at, and your grandfather would take you out. And-

Dr. Andy Galpin
All those things are true, by the way.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Okay. So put yourself back in this boat with your grandfather, and your grandfather not only took you out to fishing, he wanted to teach you the craft of fishing. He wanted to teach you the art. And so this place where he would take you to go fish, he'd explain exactly why and where at certain different times of the day you'd wanna go to this part of the lake, or you wanted to go to this part of the lake, or you wanted to go to this part of the lake. And there was one part of the

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lake that he explained to you exactly why this is where is the best chance you're gonna get a fish. And some days you go out there, and the water is crystal clear, and you can actually see the fish. And so you throw your line out, and you wait. Well, when you see the fish there, those, that's the day that you're confident. Like, I see it. I feel it. But some days the water's murky, and you can't see the fish, but you throw your line out anyways because you knew that exactly why. You knew what your grandfather told you. You knew when it did happen. And even though you couldn't see them, you knew they were there. That's belief. And athletes spend too much time, oh, I can see it or I can't see it, and that dictates their sense of belief for themself. But belief is much more underlying and much more consistent and takes a lot longer to build and to also break down than just the general notion of confidence. Confidence in big moments and pressure moments, the source of that confidence for most people is the recency.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm. Yeah, totally.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
How do I feel right now? How was my last time I was here? Like, the recency piece is-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Momentum. Right. Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... is the, yeah, is the biggest thing. And it's great when the recent stuff has been great, and you woke up with a full night of sleep, and you ate exactly what you wanted to sleep, and you feel great, and warm up is great, and then, oh, I see the fish. I'm gonna throw my line. But, like, most performance happens when that water's murky. And so we have to zoom out from just what's our source of confidence or our belief in the moment. Is it just the most recent things that we're feeling or our last performance or the warm-up I just had or how I'm feeling in the moment, or is it me really, really being very proactive with building all the different sources of confidence that I might be able to have for myself? The term in the field right now is called robust confidence, robust meaning it's very hard to break. It withstands a lot. Robust confidence is you don't take your confidence from a single source. You take your confidence from a variety of sources. For athletes, this is your physical performance. For athletes, this is the mental, the time they put in with the mental side of their performance is a source of confidence. For athletes, it's the hours of self-care that they put in away from their sport environment to recover and to prepare. Most elite athletes I've worked with who have been the most successful have nailed the self-care piece. They're doing all the s- checkboxes of what they have to do, both in recovery and preparation away from their sport environment. If they're a swimmer, it's what they're doing in the training room. It's what they're doing in their dorm room at night. They're rolling out. They're stretching. They're taking the supplements. They're doing the visualization. Like, that self-care piece for

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those elite athletes, well, you can't take that away. No matter how I feel in warm-up does not take all that stuff away. And I tell athletes at the elite level, "Your job is to build your confidence. That's your job. Spend a lot of time knowing where that confidence come from, and then in competitive moments, your job is to fight for it-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... and not allow it to be swayed by one thing that happened more recently to us." So robust confidence and having confidence come from multiple sources, those that we typically don't consider, the type of feedback we're getting, this type of social support we have, are all ways that might enable an athlete to not put so much weight into, "This is how I feel right now. This is how my last performance was."

Dr. Andy Galpin
Today's episode is sponsored by David. David makes protein bars unlike any I have ever encountered. They have an amazing 28 grams of protein, only 150 calories, and zero grams of sugar. That's right, 28 grams of protein, and 75% of its calories come from that protein. This is 50% higher than the next closest protein bar. Honestly, it's the best-tasting bar I've ever had in my life by a mile. And their newest bar, the David Bronze bar, tastes incredible as well. While I often talk about the importance of getting one gram of protein per pound of body weight for things like muscle health and recovery and the promotion of lean body mass and satiety, the reality of that is, for most people, getting that one gram of protein per pound of body weight is really challenging. However, David makes that easy. Their bars taste incredible. The Gold bar is packed with 28 grams of protein with just 150 calories, and the Bronze bar has 20 grams of protein also with just 150 calories. I eat one almost every single day and always have two or three with me in my backpack when I'm traveling, and I, like, literally mean always. It probably sounds funny, but I eat them as dessert all the time. When you try them, you'll know exactly what I mean. If you're interested in trying these bars for yourself, you can go to davidprotein.com/perform. Again, that's davidprotein.com/perform. This is akin to discipline versus motivation. Motivation is a really bad thing to use. That's your confidence, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Maybe it's here. Maybe it's not.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And it is a drug beyond all drug when you have it, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, yeah, yeah. It feels great.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
You just like-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It feels great.

Dr. Andy Galpin
But then when you don't have it, you're, you're toast if you don't have-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly

Dr. Andy Galpin
... discipline, right? This is very similar to what I was gonna ask a second ago regarding I believe you. I gotta get better at just not expecting comfort. Fine. I have a almost identical question here. I think it's gonna be the same answer.If I believe you, belief is more effective than confidence here, or even robust confidence is-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... more effective. What actual things have you used, whether this is practices or tools or strategies, to help people gain that-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... I believe you, but now what do I actually do to build this up?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
One of them is to make sure that we know there's a distinction between feeling confident and being nervous. The, the underlying piece of the performance anxiety and the being nervous and to have those expectations and pressure-

Dr. Andy Galpin
If I put a heart monitor on you, I couldn't tell.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
But you can.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
We have to make sure that we understand those are two very different things. You can be extremely nervous in the moment, and you can be extremely confident at the same time. And when I had like, one of my very first meetings at Cal was with one of our men's rowers, and he was on the team the previous year before I got there that won the national championship and was in the varsity boat that won the national championship race. And he talked about being nervous, and I said, "Go back to last June 1st, the morning of the IRA final. Talk me through that." He felt nauseous. He couldn't eat. He, super nervous. What happened? "Oh, we won." Like being able-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... to piece together, like you can, you can most certainly feel nervous in the moment. You can most certainly even at times confuse that with the state of readiness, which you, you really shouldn't do that. But like the first piece of it is I can be confident and I can be nervous at the same time. And when you sort of make that an understanding, then the confidence piece is a lot easier to hold onto when we're feeling those nerves and when we're feeling that discomfort. That, that part absolutely has to, has to be done first, otherwise if we include the same, you're going to be nervous beforehand. You're going to be. And you can be nervous, and you can be confident at the same time. That's a big thing. I also, and, you know, different athletes do it different ways, but if athletes can somehow in some form be really proactive with writing down things that they've done or experienced that lead to confidence, and then in moments where they're, they forgot about those things, they pull that out, right? There was a, an athlete at Cal, a very successful athlete, who kept on her desk a confidence jar, and she'd go home, and she'd just write something down on a little piece of paper and put it in, something she did well that day in practice or something she accomplished she didn't think she should or something she was disciplined about when she didn't feel like it. She just... And then when she got these big competitions, she'd just pour that out and start reading over them. And it's like we forget about those things because the recency effect. I feel stressed right now. Yeah, but look at the months and months that you've done with this work. I, I do have different athletes who sort of are amenable to this kind of journal.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I'll give a very, very great technique. It's called three, two, one, and you can spread it out however you wanna spread it out. But imagine you're a performer, you're an athlete or in your

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job, Sunday night, for example, three things that you did well or that you are proud of or that built confidence for you over the last week. Two things that you struggle with, fell short on, messed up, you know, failed. And then one focus moving forward. Three things you did well, two things you messed up on, what's your focus moving forward? But record them, and when you do that long enough, you're gonna start to see trends. And if you do long enough of the I'm gonna really think about the things that bring me confidence... What kind of car do you drive?

Dr. Andy Galpin
Me?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
A Rivian truck.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
A Rivian?

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
If you and I are driving in the Uber, as we did here, and a R- a Rivian passes us, you would notice that, and I would not notice that.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Of course.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's your truck. You're primed to see that. I don't see it at all. But if a Mazda CX-5 drives, especially if it's a bright red color, I register for that because that's what I'm looking for. It's, I associate something with that. And athletes who spend a lot of time reflecting on those sources of confidence for themselves throughout a long training cycle, it becomes more like the Rivian. Oh, there it is. There it is. There it is. Now, people who are overly negative and beat themselves up, that practice is not gonna turn that away in two weeks. You've gotta do that for a long time. You've gotta k- be committed to doing that for a long time because your mindset took a long time. It's not like the settings on a phone where you can just change it, and now all of a sudden now this message goes to do not disturb. Our mindset, the settings of our brain take a long time to, to do. So another part of building the confidence is putting the time in to find it on a pretty regular basis.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
I would assume you're gonna say you prefer, if not require this to be physically written down rather than just a mental exercise.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. Gotta write it down. You, uh, pretty much a renowned statement from folks in your side of the world do not just gonna do a mental exercise. It's gotta be on a piece of paper.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Or on a phone, in a note or some, some form it's gotta be-

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's gotta get out of your brain.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yes.

Dr. Andy Galpin
The three, two, one is really, I like a, what I like about it is many things, but one of them that popped up to me immediately was, first of all, you're acknowledging good and bad.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
But you're weighting good. You're doing three, not two. I don't know if that was on purpose or a total accident, but that seems, even if someone is struggling with confidence, you're, you're gonna spend more time thinking about good than you are bad, but you're gonna acknowledge both. And then, again, I'm sure this is all intentional, but the one is an action. So even after you hit those negatives, you walk from those negatives with a step moving forward.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Which is great, like so good.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
The first two parts of that three, two are reflective, and then the one is the inse- is the intent.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
The intent.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
What's moving forward from that? Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And so what your car analogy was, for folks that maybe are not self-aware, they don't have a lot of reflective innate skills or practices, it's not natural to themBy doing that, you will start to see those patterns of positive or negative or whatever they happen to be. Some people are already naturally good at that stuff. Some people are, you know, very dull in that sense-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right

Dr. Andy Galpin
... or it's like no connection to yourself. But by doing this, you'll start to see those patterns, and then you'll start to see things that are themes that are popping up-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right

Dr. Andy Galpin
... over and over again. And so by doing that, that can build that confidence. That can, that can find that confidence. Is that how you build the belief, or is that a different thing? Or how do we get from that confidence to the belief?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Ultimately, that will turn into an underlying belief because one thing that tends to happen then is that those confidence pieces that we found also then turn into forms of self-talk. We now recite those things to ourselves.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, right.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
We now repeat those things to ourselves, and what that's gonna do then is it's gonna be more effective for us in the moment to have that belief. Um, the reflection process when it comes to belief is super important. You know, I think sometimes athletes feel like Sisyphus pushing the rock up that giant mountain-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, yeah. Sure

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... every single day, and they have to kind of, "Oh, I gotta do it again." In that moment, they could, they could lose those moments of the joy, and they can lose those moments of things that are really working well for them, that, um, feedback that coaches often give focus on the things that they need to do differently. I think coaches do reinforce the positive things, but a coach's job is to point out areas that an athlete can get better. So they get that kind of source of, "Oh, I gotta focus on doing that better, do that differently," but internally now they can start focusing on some of the more confident things.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You mentioned a tactic there of writing these things down, filling up a jar. So when you're lost your confidence or you're... whatever, you can pull it back up. What about the opposite, folks that are overly confident?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I've heard people in my field say they've never, ever heard of an athlete who's overconfident. They just have never heard of it before.

Dr. Andy Galpin
They've never heard or they've never really seen it?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Don't believe.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's something misplaced or-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. There's no such thing as too much confidence.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What is that really then?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
The way that I see it play out is you start cutting corners.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yep.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You start, um... This is when upsets happen.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Sure.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
What's the opposite of underdog? When someone is the expected winner of something, they'd also-

Dr. Andy Galpin
The favorite. Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... prepare like that. The favorite. They also prepare like that, and that's where I believe overconfidence plays out with, "I just thought I had it, and I didn't do the things I needed to that got me here in the first place, and that bit me in the ass." And so now that couldn't be, that could be considered on my mind a case of someone being overconfident because they'd in fact didn't do all the things they needed to do. I think I would, I would want that person to be really self-honest.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I don't wanna necessarily have them be less confident. I don't wanna go from a place like that. But you need a, you need to be in a place of honesty, and you need to have people in your life who are gonna be able to tell you what you need to hear. If you're thinking about yourself, you being in that boat of I'm, I'm not gonna, you know, I'm, I'm not, I'm not gonna lack confidence, there are gonna be times where you need people who you trust, maybe the people you wrote on that list, to say, "You know, you're actually not that good a- at that as you thought you were."

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, I... Trust me. I got someone at h- my house-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I'm sure you do.

Dr. Andy Galpin
... that does that every day.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You walk home and, and do that.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's a necessary thing. Like, "I know you think that about yourself." "However..." Um, we all

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need that in our lives for somebody who can point out, like, that actually is more of a detriment than you think it might be, and if you don't change that, then it's gonna come back and, and potentially bite you. The reason I'd, I think it's very rare to have that happen is because I think most of us come from a place of when we'd, when we perform, we do something about ... that we really care about. And when we care about something, we see the potential of us not doing well as a threat, and that threat is what leads to the anxiousness for us, and that anxiousness is what's gonna potentially rattle our confidence. And so I, I think in most very, very high-performance settings, I, I think it's probably rare to see someone who's overconfident, so to speak.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Got it. How do you think about confidence, belief versus resilience?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Well, they- they're different things, right? I think you can probably be resilient at times and not be terribly confident, but you don't really have much of a choice. "I'm gonna push through this, so I'm gonna..." The, the piece with the resilience piece that I think that we forget about is the passion piece. Like, whether we're confident or not in a moment, if we're, if we're dealing with something that we're passionate about, that passion is what's gonna make us resilient. That's Angela Duck-worth's-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, yeah. Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... grit, you know, is that we forget about it's not just working hard through things, it's you have passion for the goals that you're pursuing. And the passion's there even when the confidence is not there. So you can be resilient in the presence of pursuing that even when you're experiencing setbacks and even when you don't necessarily feel confident in the moment to be able to do that. That's how I kinda see those.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mental toughness. So when I think about confidence, when I think about belief as you're describing them, I think, "Okay, my belief is there. I built that. That's a long-term system that you put into me, so now that's not gonna waver." Confidence is gonna go up and down based upon things like if I lack mental toughness, I might lose my confidence. If I'm down on my score, if I screwed something up, if I get physically tired, this... I feel like this is how a lot of people represent mental toughness, and, uh, whether those are actually connected or not or that's the right terminology, I'm not exactly sure, so that'd be one... be great to hear that clarified. But is that something that is underpinning this wavering confidence, or are those in fact separate things

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as well?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mental toughness generally is framed as a person's ability to perform their best under any circumstance. And so you're getting into a little bit about the resilience piece because I need to be able to be my best when the weather is not favorable or something unexpected happens to me or something happens with the equipment that I've relied on and now I have to use a different tennis racket or... Mental toughness is one's ability to perform at their best regardless of the conditions.Now, confidence is obviously going to be a big piece of that, but coping skills is another big piece of the mental toughness piece, meaning I wish something was the way it was, it's not, and what do I want to do with that? Part of it is a level of acceptance. Like some, some of this stuff is just I can't control it, I can't change it, so I'm gonna just accept the circumstance that I'm in, and when I accept it it takes a lot of the power off of it. That's a form of coping tool. So in those moments when we're dealing with adversity, which is what we typically associate with resilience, some of it could be the confidence piece, but other piece of it can be other coping tools that we've learned-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... when we're experiencing that to be able to perform while those things are happening. You mentioned earlier I think the emotion piece, and I think when I think of coping strategies and mental toughness, I think the emotional regulation piece is a, a really, really, really massive part of it, and I think this is maybe where that comes in. So I'm dealing with something and something occurs that registers in to me some emotion. I think from a mental performance perspective, a psychological perspective, the emotional regulation piece in performance environments is y- you can't get away. If I were to use, in the s- sports that I work with, one word that describes a sport the most, I would say emotional. Tennis is a more emotional than anything else. I think it's why people watch sports, I think it's why people play sports. It's why if you already knew the result of the NFC Championship gr- ship game, watching it would mean something entirely different than watching without knowing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I can't watch games ever. Like the recorded games. I can't do it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
No. It's-

Dr. Andy Galpin
I get zero chance

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... there's nothing for you. There's no what? There's no emotion with that. Why not? 'Cause you know the result of it. So that's, that, that's gonna come with sports is the emotional piece. And in the work that I do with athletes, that has changed a lot from, I think earlier in my career the term emotional control and being able to control our emotions was one of the kind of like prominent ways of like, oh, well if you're nervous, then control that. Don't be nervous. Or if you made a mistake and you're frustrated, then just don't be frustrated, just control that emotion. I think the science behind it right now does not look at it as a form of controlling emotions so much as regulating ourselves when we experience emotions. Just like I mentioned about self-talk, about the danger of distinguishing positive versus negative self-talk, I also think what's really helpful when we wanna regulate our emotions is also not see an emotion as being a positive or negative thing. We generally, all of us ... Well, first of all, most people if they were asked to name emotions, they could probably list about 10.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, sure.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
There's hundreds.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, yeah, yeah .

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
There's hundreds of emotions, right?

Dr. Andy Galpin
What are the ones who are in the movie? I can, I can get that far.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Well, part two even. And so then when we do that, we tend to distinguish, oh, that's a positive or a negative emotion, and that's where we get into the whole control thing is, well, if it's a negative emotion, we can't have that. Every emotion serves a purpose. And when I'm experiencing an emotion, I have to first be able to label it the emotion is first, and then I have to understand why that emotion exists. And when I know why an emotion exists, I'm not so worried about fighting it anymore, because I know it serves a purpose. Okay? A great example is like, you know, regret. You say something and it hurts somebody and you realize that, and then you experience regret. Regret is not a pleasant emotion to experience, but we have it because the next time we're in that environment, we're a lot less likely to hurt the person that we didn't intend to hurt, so that's why we feel regret. And so when I feel it, I know why I feel it, and I can manage that response a little bit better. So I think what's really important with emotions, there's a great recent book out

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called Dealing with Feelings. Hate the title of it. Mark Brackett is the author. Like I d- I would've went with a different name, but this, this book about like it's never the emotion that we experience that's gonna have any impact on, on our lives whatsoever. It's how we respond to that. It's what we do next.

Dr. Andy Galpin
The labeling of it and yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Very powerful thing. It's like someone cuts you off and you get upset about it. That's never what's gonna change your day. It's you flipping the guy off and he flipping you off, and now the two of you stop and one of you gets out of the car, next thing you know someone's in jail, and that was the thing that ruins your life, not the fact that you got angry over it happening. So I do a lot of like, like the labeling piece with athletes is, like when you experience that, what emotion did you feel? Ah. And then we kinda get through why do you think you experienced that? And so the emotional control piece is, is pretty huge. You can, you can perform successfully and, and effectively in the presence of any emotion. The, the big piece of it after the labeling piece is to just say, "All right. That's what it is." And controlling it's not gonna do anything for you. Often it's just, okay, that's why I'm feeling this. What do I wanna do with that? What's next for me? It's that next what's next piece. So I'm gonna have the reaction. It's gonna last a few seconds. Then I have to stop. Gotta take a breath for a moment. All right, now what? Now what do I wanna do? And then the emotion has no power whatsoever. Now, when you're very emotional environments and your coach is emotional and the fans are emotional and your teammates are emotional, that can be difficult to do, but it actually gives you a, a massive, massive power. Another piece with the emotional piece that's been really, really, I think, pronounced recently is this no- notion of how we experience emotions in the presence of other people's emotions. It's called co-regulation.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It is similar to, like mirror-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mirror neurons are-

Dr. Andy Galpin
There you go

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... sort of at, at, at the neurological level. Um, if you were to drink whiskey or wine, it would taste better when you did it with someone you liked. It would taste better. Movies are more powerful when you watch them with people you like versus when you're watching them yourself. Music,

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when you listen to music with other people, it's far more emotional than when you listen to a song by yourself. It's a great starting port to understandCo-regulation or what's also referred to as emotional contagion, meaning what I'm experiencing emotionally is very easily caught. And when I work in very high pressure situations with- with- which I do, I need to know what emotion is that athlete sitting in my office feeling, and then how do I wanna co-re- regulate that? Sometimes you use the phrase mirror. I think you were referring to mirror neurons.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, exactly, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Sometimes I wanna match that person's emotion 'cause it validates it, and I nee- I need to know if they're feeling sad, when should I also have a reaction that's sad? What, what does that help them to do? I also need to know maybe when I need to exhibit a different emotion for them. They're feeling really, really afraid of something, maybe I need to bump up the confidence piece or the excitement piece or something. So the co-regu- regulation thing is a massive thing when it comes to human relationships. Coaches have a massive responsibility with the co-regulation piece in competitive sports because, number one, they're the adult in the room, literally.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yep.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Um, they've been there. They've done that usually. And they walk into a locker room, and locker rooms are very emotional places, and the first thing a coach needs to do is read the room. It's halftime. We're down two goals. Is the team not taking this seriously, or are they too light? If that's the case, they need to up the intensity to bring focus in the players. The players are too low, they're too negative with each other, the coach is gonna need to do something that's a lot more positive in that moment to kinda co-re- regulate that environment. It's a massive tool in places of work. Like, just seeing a coworker, seeing your spouse exhibit some emotion and knowing what you can do in that moment to help them regulate that emotion a little bit better, whether it be mirroring that emotion with them or trying to counter that emotion with itself, and I think that's the new frontier of emotion regulation because we work, humans work in relationship to- with each other. That co-regulation piece is a very exciting new kind of area that, that I'm interested in.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I'm gonna ask you for you to put on your coaching hat on. And I'm gonna give you a scenario, and I want you to coach me through this.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Okay.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And this scenario is gonna make your stomach turn.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Awesome.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Uh, yesterday, the NFC Championship game. And there was a play with one of the players, uh, Tariq Woolen, the, the corner, and, uh, the end of the game, the Seahawks, his team, got a, a big stop. Almost surely were gonna win the game because of this. After the play is over, he's basically on the other team's bench-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... trash talking, gets a flag, so the Rams get to keep the ball, and the game ends up coming down to the wire because of it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Well, right after that flag happened, the very next play, the Rams throw a pass right at him. They score a touchdown on him. So you went from giving the team the ball back to giving them seven points. The entire stadium went from about 115 decibels-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... positive-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep

Dr. Andy Galpin
... to booing. And the whole planet, I'm sure in Reek Woolen's brain, was hating him in that moment.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
If you were Reek himself, and then I wanna ask you if you were as a coach or someone on the sidelines. I have no idea what happened. Turns out the Seahawks still won. Great. That's amazing. That's the most important part of the story. Seahawks still won the game. After that flag, you all can hopefully empathize with what he was feeling. You know everyone was mad at you. His team's literally yelling at him. We saw images of his team there, and you don't know what they're saying. They could've been saying, "You're the man. We love you." Like, you don't know that they're saying negative stuff to him.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Sure.

Dr. Andy Galpin
But the most predictable thing ever on that next play was like, "They're gonna go right at this guy." And now, in fairness, the guy that scored a touchdown on him is one of the best players in the whole league. So that could happen on any play. So I don't even know if... What I'm trying to walk away from is the assumption that this was all negative. I don't know.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Sure.

Dr. Andy Galpin
But what would you have said after that flag, knowing something inside's gonna be happening right now? You just let the team down on a really bad decision. What... Are there phrases, are there sayings, if you were Reek himself, in that second person, Reek, what, what kind of things would you be saying to yourself? And then as the coach would be my second question.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Number one, move on. The game's not over. His doing that was a great indication that he was thinking ahead and that he was using his emotional response to predict the future and to rub it in and to do whatever it is that, that he wanted to do.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So after the play, he thought the game basically was over, and he, he let, he probably let himself go too far.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yes, that... He had the emotional reaction of being excited about it. His response then was to-

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Predict the future

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... that's right, and then his response was to do what led to that occurring. In all fairness, I did not watch that play. I had a very hard time watching most of that game.

Dr. Andy Galpin
We'll leave out why. We'll leave out why.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I'm a big Niners fan, and yeah, I was still reeling from that.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You're in a 15-year joke, friend.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
The, the, in the moment, the most important thing for him, 'cause he has to go back on the, on the field is-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, like, the very next play

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... not to judge him, not to shame him, not to do whatever. It's move on. We're in the game, next play. That's the only thing I could have ever said to that guy in that moment. It's not to try and counsel him out of it. It's not to get him to apologize. Nothing but-

Dr. Andy Galpin
So his self-talk should have been, "Reek, that didn't matter. Like, next play."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Next play.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What's the next thing?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Make a stop. We gotta make a stop. It's the only thing that I'm trying to do is to get him to come back to the present moment. Now, he's gonna probably... I don't know what his next step is gonna be with the team or I don't know how-

Dr. Andy Galpin
It doesn't matter, yeah

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... but he's gonna have to learn from that. But in that particular moment right now, I needed to come back to the now and like, "You gotta go make a stop right now. That's enough."

Dr. Andy Galpin
Before we go on to the coach, on the couch, my brother said, "He's gonna make a mistake trying to make up for that." So you have this one thing of, like, las- lo- lack of confidence right there.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And then you have the probably what many competitors would do would be to go too far.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Of course.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And what they end up doing is they run a what's called a double route, basically like fake one way, then go the other, because he was being so aggressive to make the play.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Move on to the next play would-Makes sense to me that that would stop the negative self-talk.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Uh-huh.

Dr. Andy Galpin
How do you make sure you don't press and go too far, right? How do you stay present in the next play without being like, "You have to make up for this right now"?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So he needs to be directed. He's got to regulate his physiology in the moment immediately. Take a deep breath first. Separate yourself from the situation. Walk back to the defensive huddle. When you're doing that, you've gotta down regulate as much as you possibly can. Breathe. Come on. Come down, come down, come down. Get focused so that he can be engaged and ready to make the stop on the next play. I think it was very smart what the Rams did to target him because that-

Dr. Andy Galpin
The biggest non-surprise ever. You go right at him, right?

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep. So just in that moment I, we gotta get this guy to, to be quickly down regulated and get back and refocused in the moment. That's the only thing that matters in that moment. We can't change the situation. He can't undo what he did. He can't apologize for that moment. He's gotta go back there and perform at that... The problem is, is that that lack of him being able to regulate that spiral for him.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And then it, it turned into him probably doing what you said, which is to then try to now have to prove and do too much and, you know.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Do you tell yourself, again, using your second, like if you hear him, do you say, "Reek, just do your job. Get back here. Don't worry about it, but just do your job"?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's over. What's next? We gotta make a stop.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That's it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I don't need to do too much. I don't need to do too little.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right here.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Right here.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Besides the down regulation breath-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, yeah

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Dr. Andy Galpin
... are there any other physical things they can do? I, I'm thinking of athletes I know sometimes will have a, they'll wear a, a piece of jewelry, or they'll wels- wear something on their body that is kind of their, their home base.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Are there any other things like that, that people can try as, as a way to get back when I just, like, can't catch my breath? I can't calm my brea- Like, I know what I'm supposed to be doing, Dr. Wiersma, but, like, it's not working. I'm freaking out right now.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You ever seen George Kittle's tattoo on his forearm?

Dr. Andy Galpin
No.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
He has a little reset button.

Dr. Andy Galpin
No kidding.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Something, something like that, that he learned when he was in college, that he needed to, like, push, tap his arm, and that was his way of resetting, "Now I'm coming right back to my present moment, my center."

Dr. Andy Galpin
So he has a, a physical thing he'll actually touch himself on and a tattoo of it?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Uh-huh. Yeah. I haven't seen it in person. I've heard him talking about it before.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Can that be anything? Is there specific stuff that it has to be? Does it matter at all what that tactical thing is?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So when I work with tennis players and they have that little, um, what do they call it? A-

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Dr. Andy Galpin
A little eye in the racket

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... but they'll either on that piece of it or on the wrap-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... of their handle, they'll, they'll write something down. One of the teams I was working with last year, there was a player who used to, emotions go, and he'd get, he'd get picked on by the other team. They would purposely target him to get him out in, in the red, right?

Dr. Andy Galpin
This is a really common thing, by the way, for people. If, if you don't know pro sports, that is a really highly coached thing.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's like a, an intentional playbook thing-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Absolutely

Dr. Andy Galpin
... that will be done to go after people like that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And we had to figure out a way for him to be able to use what we were, the, the phrases we were using in my office to go out on the field when it was occurring. And so he would put tape around his wrists, and I'm not gonna say what he wrote on it-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Sure, sure, sure

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... but, but he would, he would look at that a lot.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So it can be a phrase, it can be a, a reminder, it can be a... It doesn't matter what it is 'cause, 'cause you could write reset, the word reset, and it wouldn't matter for any athlete, and it matters

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for George. Like it, it, the word is totally independent for, for the person, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. And then if I'm one of his teammates and I go over and put my hand on his shoulders and I say, "Look me in the eyes," like that is a grounding thing. That's co-regulation at its greatest, I think, is when you look him in the eyes and say, "Right here. Take a breath with me. Let's go. Make a stop," like that's a super, super powerful thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So if second part then would've been if you were his coach or teammate, that's what you'd have done.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
In that moment.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Walk him... Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
In that moment.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You know what's happening with him.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Of course.

Dr. Andy Galpin
He feels horrible about it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, and he's gotta come back out there and he's gotta perform.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
When I work with a team, I try to create common language so that it's a very powerful concept, and it's either a visual or some very short term that represents what that concept is so that everybody's on the same page with it. And our, I try to be careful about using examples that people can gain who I'm talking about, but one of the teams that I work with, our men's soccer team was in the ACC playoffs last year, and we were in the lead on the road against a much higher ranked team, and towards the end of the game one of the players on their team took out one of our guys with a very obviously illegal tackle meant to hurt the kid. And he did it for a

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reason, so that we would respond.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
We would react, right?

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And everybody from the coaches, the bench, the people on the field at the same time said the exact same thing to each other, and it's just like we all got it. Like, that's the value of being able to have a unified, powerful messaging that, like, all of us, we all can look each other in the eyes and just say one thing and we got it. Not gonna affect us. We're right here, right? So I try to, I try to help teams create that sort of communication and that language.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Well, these would qualify as your differences between emotional control versus emotional regulation.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I think so, yeah. Yep.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I guess is the regulation piece-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
What do we do now?

Dr. Andy Galpin
Right. Rather than controlling it as a way of thinking about don't let it get out of-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right, right, right. Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... don't let it move away-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Or change it

Dr. Andy Galpin
... or hold it, no, no, no, just what do we, what's the next step?

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
What's next?

Dr. Andy Galpin
How do we bring it back to this-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's right

Dr. Andy Galpin
... this midline?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Today's episode is sponsored by LMNT. LMNT is an electrolyte drink that has an ideal electrolyte ratio of sodium, potassium, and magnesium, but no sugar. Hydration is critical to performance, both physical and mental, and countless studies have shown that even a slight degree of dehydration, even as small as 1%, can lead to decreases in physical output and mental performance. We also know that electrolytes are critical to proper hydration, which I've been harping on for years. But you can't do that, proper hydration, by only drinking water, especially if you sweat a lot. You need to get the right amount of electrolytes in the right ratios, and that's why I'm a huge fan of LMNT. In fact, many of you might remember that I featured LMNT in my YouTube series on hydration nearly six years ago.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
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Dr. Andy Galpin
I know you've worked with some UFC fighters. Many of, you know, we've been fortunate to share some clients in the past. I think this is a really good example because in the UFC, you fight for five minutes and you have one minute. In between rounds, you do three or five rounds. You don't have 90 minutes. You don't have two and a half hours. You don't have timeouts. You don't... So as a coach, you can either scream during the fight, which is what they do, or you have- ... realistically 30 to 40 seconds to coach.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Really tough thing. A friend of mine, Sean O'Malley, I've known a long time, his coach, Tim Welch, is one of the best in the world, I think, at the coaching in between the rounds. He comes in the round, Tim and Brandon, his other coach, the first, I don't know, 10 seconds, it's just be right here. I actually think that's the phrase they use. I can't remember exactly, but it's like, "Be right here."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
"Be right here." They don't even actually... 'Cause a lot of coaches will say things like, "Take a deep breath. Take a deep breath." They'll do that. But they actually have, like, almost gone to the second step already, which is just like, because Sean is so trained on be right here also means-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly

Dr. Andy Galpin
... breathe, right? He doesn't need to say anything more. Then he has a couple of points he gets to and gets to the next. I think we've already covered that with what you just said of why you would do that. My question on this would be, when you see a UFC fight, you'll see a couple of different styles of coaching in the corner. One is a very tactical, "Hey, he's doing ABC. We wanna run this play," right? "This exact thing," or, "Do this move next." And the other is just simply none of that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And it's literally the slap in the face, the... You'll see criticism-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... from fans, because you're like, "Man, he didn't do anything to, he didn't need to..." And then the other criticism is like, "He didn't even tell him what to do, he just hyped him up." I think it's foolish to say one of those is... You, there's a time and a place where it's like you don't need anything technical right now, you just need there.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What is the time and the place for either one? How do I know as that corner person, and if you're not coaching UFC fighters, I get it, there's like 12 of you. This is the same thing, though, as if you are, and picture yourself in any situation you're in, right? How am I leading my children? How am I leading my whatever through really intense situation where pressure's on the line, we gotta move quickly. I don't know if you can give us any direct answers here, but how do I even know when I need to just give the rah-rah, and I don't worry about technical, or the opposite, or I need to blend both? You kind of brought this up earlier.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
If you are a coach, you should already know in that moment what that athlete needs. And you could be having 20 athletes you coach, and every single one of them might need something different. So that's your first job. Whether it be flat out in situations like this, what do you need from me? That conversation is massively important, 'cause the athlete will tell you what they need.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So this is coaching to the athlete rather than coaching to your coaching style.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
100%.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
100%. The best coaches are the ones that can adapt to what that particular athlete needs. So you should know going into it exactly what that athlete needs or wants. And needing and wanting are different. Sometimes an athlete wants something, and the conversation well in advance of it is, "I think you also need this." The athlete might want to say, "Just let me breathe for a minute," and the coach might need to say, "I'm here to give you one or two things that I want you to think about going into the next round. I'll do that in the best way to help you." So that's gotta be known before the, so that now the coach isn't making a decision when the coach is emotional-

Dr. Andy Galpin
You'll be stunned-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... about what to do

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Dr. Andy Galpin
... that that conversation never happens.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It has to happen.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It never happens. I can tell you-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
The coach is a performer in that moment, and the coach is emotional, and the coach is on edge. And depending on how the fighter's doing, that coach is feeling the same way. And now if you go in there with the-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Sometimes worse, I'm telling you right now, coaching those people-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
For sure

Dr. Andy Galpin
... oh, it's, it's horrible.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I hear you.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's horrible.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That should be something that is known before that moment occurs. You have to take into consideration the fact that in that five-minute round, that fighter's mind is racing at all times. They're taking in so much information, and in that minute they have, they can't be getting too much more of that. They have to have a place where they can just detach and let that sort of mental fatigue clear out a little bit before they're g- the coach is probably gonna be able to say anything that they're actually gonna register and remember going out there. I think you have to take that into account. Whatever you say needs to be simple, and it shouldn't be anything new. And I think, I think going into it, having phrases that you can use that you can, that the athlete already knows what it means. I work with our tennis teams, and our stands at Cal are right over the courts. It's a dream of my role. So I could sit right, literally right over the player and see their routines, and are they doing the breathing, and have they gone to the towel, and what is the coach feedback to them? If it's doubles, I get to hear the doubles. It was perfect. I could be in their mind in that moment and know exactly what it is they're doing. But I can also then hear the

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coach's feedback, and man, our head coach is amazing at that piece of it. He knows exactly what that athlete might need to hear in that moment, and he'll say something like, "Go fishing." This is not the same reference of the fishing example I gave earlier. The coach used to go fishing when he, in his mind, when he was a player himself at the elite level 'cause he was stressed. In between points, he would just close his eyes and go to the lake and just like, um, for a moment of downregulation isI'm going fishing for just a moment. So they help use that as an example. That phrase, go fishing, they know exactly what it means, they've heard it before, it's simple, and it allows them to do whatever they might want with that. That's the approach I think I would take in that situation, in that minute as a coach.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. Are you familiar with the, uh, I think it was Joe Montana with the Super Bowl story?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Is it... Was it Joe?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It was Joe Montana. Are you talking about John Candy?

Dr. Andy Galpin
On, uh, in, in the stands?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yes.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. Tell that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Okay. So it's the 1989 Super Bowl. The 49ers are playing against the Bengals. The Niners are down by three points. They have 92 yards to drive, and I believe there was, I don't know, a couple minutes on the clock.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Uh, maybe less. Yeah. Very, very end of the game. Super Bowl.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And so imagine now the quarterback having a conversation with the head coach on the sideline, 'cause they didn't have the in-ear microphones, and then the team is all huddled up and everyone in the huddle is tighter to, as tight as can be, and they're in the end zone because

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that's where they're starting on that side of the field. And Joe Montana walks out, and he sees the state that those guys, he sees their eyes. Like, they're in the moment, but they're too much in the moment. And he goes, "Look, guys," and he pointed in the stands. He's like, "There's John Candy. Can you believe John Candy's here?" And what the, what the offensive lineman has said is it took their whole tension and it just melted it in a moment. Like, number one, "Oh, there's John Candy." Number two, "That's our quarterback. He's not throttled at all. Let's fucking win this game." Like, that moment of him to be able to say something so unexpected and composed, like, "Hey, there's John Candy, guys. Let's go win this game," like, that one phrase just changed everything. It's remarkable.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. Showing the rest of the team, yes, this is a big moment, of course, but I'm still able to have peripheral senses.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I'm in the moment.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I'm in the moment. I'm right here.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I do wanna make a comment on that about coaching. When you say that that's probably not a conversation coaches can have, coaching is a performance, and I think often coaches think of themselves as at most coaches were athletes themselves, at least the sports I work with. And coaches need that performance support as well, and for them to be able to know that that conversation needs to exist prior to that moment is something that they can be taught and something they can get a lot better at.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I feel like in my personal experience, I know more coaches that have hired or utilize sports psychologists or, uh, mental performance coaches than I know players. I've never heard anybody talk about that. I think the general audience and fans do not realize what percentage of coaches, because this is not different, or this is different rather than a coach taking a leadership course, taking a coaching course, which is, how do I get more out of my athletes? What you're referring to is the coaches themselves wanting to get more out of themselves. So what stuff have you been doing recently, we'll call it coaches, but again, this is leadership. This is, could also just be you leading your kids. Doesn't matter, right? How do you make sure your emotional control versus regulation is in the right spot? And is it maybe any different than anything we've said before, or the, the exact same tools apply?

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Every mental skill that I might teach an athlete or a skill that you might teach an athlete, a performer, could be utilized by all those examples of the people you just mentioned, every single one of them.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Visualizing.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Whether it be visualizing, and the self-talk piece, and the emotion regulation, everything we just talked about.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Having a home base and-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yes

Dr. Andy Galpin
... bringing themselves back down and present.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
All those things. The interesting thing about coaches, and this is coaches in my experience, particularly working in Olympic sports, there's interesting research on what's referred to as the super elite athlete. What distinguishes between an elite athlete and a non-elite athlete, it's so much.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yep.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
But what distinguishes between the super elite and the elite? That's a really interesting... And there's been a lot of similarities, and one of those is, you know, the super elite athlete feels like they need to win more than they want to win. They have to win. Their life is over if they don't win, and the perfectionistic tendencies that they have, and that's very, very common for the super elite athlete, many of whom become coaches. And I could tell you a number of coaches who I work with or have worked with who came from the super elite-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... and now they're in the coaching role. And all those traits that they took to their performance

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that were probably traits that could've cost them, they initiate on their athletes. And so they need to really, really be aware of when they're bringing that to athletes who are probably nowhere near as capable and talented and as accomplished as they were. So, um, number one, I think people don't realize that most coaches are under more stress and pressure than most athletes are, and I think we tend to focus on the performer. But it's the man or woman on the sideline who's calling the plays who probably is feeling a lot more of it, and they have to be clear in those moments and not emotional in those moments, and yet all eyes fall on them, and it's expected of them. So working with coaches is such a really, really important piece of what I do and what I like to do. Number one, it's the hardest part of my job-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... and it's also my favorite part of my job, to be quite frank. Coaches are, could be very difficult to work with, but they can also be, like, super rewarding and fun to work with as well.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You mentioned earlier being able to come into a room and identify if they need the energy or the tactics.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Uh-huh.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I imagine this is one of the things you spend your time on. How do you help those coaches learn that?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
After the fact.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Ah, I see. Reflection.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So, like, you know, if you're gonna give a coach advice, you better really be trusted or you better be a total stranger. I think those are the only two people that a coach is gonna listen to. Like, "Oh, you said this." I don't think they're gonna listen to anybody in between.And so I, I think part of my job is to observe, evaluate. I take my notebook, and I'm very aware of maybe a coach says something in the locker room that I think I knew the intent of, and then later I'll say, like, "You mentioned this in the locker room. I think this is may of how it came off." And they wanna hear that, I think, because often either they didn't intend for it to be that way, or they intended it,

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and I said, "I don't think it was the right approach." And coaches want to hear that, they need to hear that, but you gotta be really careful with how it is that you, that you phrase that. And I'm always gonna call out the things that they said that were really, really good. 'Cause, man, coaches put on a master class of leadership in very emotional moments, and the things that coaches say in those moments are just brilliant. I'll write them down and I'll make sure afterwards I'll say, "Man, when you said that, I had to write that down. It was that good." They need that reinforcement of the things that they say that I think really landed well to co-regulate the group or to really focus the group or how they gave critical feedback to an athlete. They need to hear the things they said that I think were really, really powerful, were really, really effective for them, coupled with the things that I don't think they really knew how that probably landed at the time. And I think it's part of my job to mention, "Look, you said this to the group. I think this is how that was taken. I think maybe think about it differently next time we're in that situation," or something.

Dr. Andy Galpin
How do you personally create buy-in with that, I'll just assume, head coach?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I'm hearing that right now thinking, I'm coaching these people. All the pressure's on me. If I win or lose, I'm getting fired, and I'm gonna let some guy-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Uh-huh

Dr. Andy Galpin
... sit in the corner-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yes

Dr. Andy Galpin
... with a notebook?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
A notebook. Uh-huh.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That sounds like-

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Crazy, huh?

Dr. Andy Galpin
... every coach saying, "Hell no."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly.

Dr. Andy Galpin
How do you get to that spot?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You put the work in. You show up. You sit in the coach's launch in the middle of the rain and wind, and you suffer with them. And you sit there with them when they've experienced their greatest su- uh, success, and you sit with them when they've experienced their greatest failure. And you... It takes time to build that. We cannot do this work from our offices. I don't know what kind of picture people have in their mind of, like, mental performance people or psychologists who work with teams, like-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Can I tell you the picture?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Please.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Here's my picture.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I got a guy freaking out on the team, can't handle his shit. I gotta get a s- a sports psych in here. The only person that needs it is the person who's-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly

Dr. Andy Galpin
... tanking in the big game. If I were to picture-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm

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Dr. Andy Galpin
... most of the field, that's what they think sports psychology is.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And then that person either goes to an office-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yep

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... or sits on a Zoom call-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Super sterile environment

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... or a phone call. They're not in the moment when it happened. They didn't hear the feedback the coach gave them. They're not getting the hail pour down around on them. They're not in the locker room after a loss when everyone's crying. They're crying with them. Like, you have to be there, and you have to be there through all of it, and you have to admit when you, when something was on you. I met up with a, with a coach last year of a group. I said, "That was a mental loss, and that's on me. That's totally on me." And I'll be the first to say to your adv- your sport admin or anybody else, "That was a mental loss, and that should not have happened on my watch, and it's not gonna happen again on my watch." 'Cause I'll make mistakes. I'll underestimate things as well.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Of course.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And I'll hold onto that for years afterwards. If I'm willing to be there with them, and I'm willing to be there for the good and the bad and to make my own mistakes and, like, learn with them and... I think that that has to be there in order for a coach to be able to let someone sit there with a notebook in the locker room.

Dr. Andy Galpin
We probably should've started the conversation off with this, but this is the difference between what you guys are now calling mental performance coaches-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

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Dr. Andy Galpin
... and mental health.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
This is sports psychology versus psychology or psychiatry. It is this aspect of it. I mean, you're still dealing with human emotions-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... but it's an entirely different thing. This is not just dis- first of all, not disease, per se. And it's not just simply, I'm upset because this thing happened.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
This is as active coaching-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep

Dr. Andy Galpin
... as we could possibly get. And so when I, when I've had, I'll say, ownership and GM groups of major sport teams ask me about this aspect-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... my reaction is, it's funny you said earlier, but I always say, "Go all or go out."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Uh-huh.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Because you, if you're just hiring a consultant here and there-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Who's in their office, who never-

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Just, just get out, like, get them outta here. If you-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I know

Dr. Andy Galpin
... if you're gonna do this, they should be a full staff member, like you would hire a strength-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Embedded

Dr. Andy Galpin
... and conditioning coach-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Embedded

Dr. Andy Galpin
... who's just, like, sending programs.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That would never work. You would never do that with a physical therapist.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You'd, you want them in the building for a reason. So if you're gonna try to work on this aspect, which, yeah, I don't know if sports psych's a real thing.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Still a little on the soft side for you.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Very soft science for me. I, I don't know how you do this because if not, what you're dealing is, is s- with, it's just psychologists. And fine, if you wanna send them to an office twice a week and they wanna do talk therapy or whatever amazing stuff they're doing, and you do need that plenty of times.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Loads of... Athletes are humans too. They have everything else going on. But this is not that. What you're talking about is really improving the quality of as many interactions as you can in practice and the game and, and using what we've learned from clinical and traditional psychology, uh, but in the sense of excellence.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Performance.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Performance-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... I guess is one way to say it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's embedded. My role in what I do in being effective is to be embedded with the team, be part of that team, and then, you know, the services that we provide at Cal, there's four full-time mental performance consultants. No one else in the country's doing this at the collegiate level.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You have four of them?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Four full-time.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Wow. That's how bad at your job you are.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, exactly. 30 teams.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's 30 cheese.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
30 teams.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Cheese.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I'm so bad, they need four bad ones to do it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
They need four of you guys.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And so we're available for one-on-ones, where the student athletes can come into our offices. That's where that type of work takes place.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Sure.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And then they can ... The greatest thing about that is, like, I'm also at practices. So I'm at practice in the morning. This coach says something to this athlete. The athlete comes in and mentions it, and then I get the context, and I can say-

Dr. Andy Galpin
And you know the truth

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... "I was there."

Dr. Andy Galpin
"Eh, it didn't happen that way."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
"I, I ... Well, it did happen, but here's how I took that." Like-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... it's good to have a different perspective of it. We're traveling. We're on the, we're on the benches with the coaches at games. We're walking with the coach to the locker room to help him process. "Okay, couple things that you might consider," or, "What, what should I say?" Or, you know, like, that's embedded work. That's, like, fully servicing our, our coaches, our athletes, our

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support staff, that sort of thing. That's the way this field needs to work.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Biofeedback. I know you've used this a lot.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You're the first person I saw use it-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm

Dr. Andy Galpin
... many, many, many years ago. I've seen you use it with professional athletes in a bunch of different realms. And why I gravitated towards it was because I saw the first connecting piece between psychology and physiology.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I think sports psychology probably in the beginning focused a lot on just, like, managing your nerves. You're feeling, you're feeling nervous. What do you wanna do about it? What are some techniques that you can use to kinda compose yourself? We might refer to down-regulate now. Biofeedback was probably one of the first ways that people could actually demonstrate, okay, uh, if I'm gonna tell you to breathe a certain way, you need to know why. It's not, it's not good enough for me just to say, "Do this, and this what happens." I want-

Dr. Andy Galpin
I think this is what caught me up, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. I want you to see it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Okay? I use biofeedback in my office, and just last week I had a athlete come in there and was just talking about, like, "I know I'm ready, but I just don't like that feeling before a race. I just, I just don't like that feeling, and I, I get, I feel like my mind's starting to race a little bit, and I feel like things are starting to tight- tighten up. And had a great warm-up, and then that period of time from the warm-up to my event is just ... I got ... I needed to do something." I was like, "I got something for you." So one of the biofeedback, um, programs that we use is, uh, HRV, and we

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do breathing techniques. And so what I'll do is I'll have an athlete, and I'll, I'll have them hooked up to the, to the biofeedback. And I'll just take a moment to say, "Okay. Now look at, this is your heart rate, and this is what you're seeing on the screen and everything, and I'm gonna just talk for... We're gonna nerd out on this." Athletes at Cal love to nerd out on anything. I love it about-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... these athletes.

Dr. Andy Galpin
They're smart.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Let's nerd out.

Dr. Andy Galpin
They're smart people, right? Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So okay. I'm gonna let this run. Now I'm gonna kind of talk about what's happening. I'm gonna talk about the sympathetic. I'm gonna talk about the parasympathetic. I'm gonna talk about why athletes are so good with the, with the sympathetic.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I know what you're doing right now. You're devious. Ah, you're a devious man.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Right? And I'm-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... I'm ... You know? And then, and then I, I like to... Then I've got a whiteboard, and I like to kinda show, like, all right, what, what's happening, and why it, why is it that we extend our exhale? What happens when we exhale with our heart rate, for example, and what are we looking for between the sympathetic, parasympathetic, and ... And then I'll, like, I'll say, "Look at your heart rate pattern." Then I'll look at the whiteboard. And what if we were to be in a state of coherence, the balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic, and what if your heart rate pattern did this? And I draw it on the whiteboard. And they saw nothing like that on the screen before at all. I was like, "All right, so close your eyes for a moment, and we're gonna take

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a few breaths. I'm gonna talk you through." And close your eyes. And I record on the timestamp on the biofeedback where this occurred. And I talk them through the breathing technique that I wanted to use. And, um, right before their competition, I say, "Open your eyes." And they're, they just freeze because what they're seeing on the screen is exactly what I wrote on the whiteboard. And that's a powerful moment for them to understand, okay, this is what's happening. This is what to do when it's happening, and then this is what's going to happen. And then the big thing is then when this happens, then what? And so now they, they know all that stuff. They haven't seen anything yet. They open their eyes, and then boom, there it is. And, like, it's a ... They need that in the competitive moment for that belief. Like, when I'm doing the breathing right now, even if I don't feel it doing anything different, I'm going fishing. You know why? Because I saw it. And then I do a session with them where it's, it's testing if they can do it without getting the immediate feedback, but then you show them what's actually happening later. It's like, there's the fishing. That's where you wanna throw your line. That's what's happening if you just take a moment to compose yourself, to control your breathing. It's all you gotta do in that moment. You don't have to change anything else. Everything's gonna stay the same, but just right now when you're feeling that, this is all you gotta do. It's simple. Just slow things down. Let's just do this for a moment. And now they know exactly what's gonna happen, and that could actually be a super, super powerful tool. It's not just I'm feeling tight. I wanna do something to ... I don't like the word relax. It's not what we're getting at, to down-regulate or to be more composed. It's why and what's happening when I do it, and that can be a really super powerful thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
N- I covered a lot of details of HRV, uh, in a previous episode on HRV, respiratory rate, and resting heart rate, in a previous season.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I listened to the whole thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Okay. Y- we can link that in the show notes if you want more details, so we'll skip some of that now. But what you're really saying here is I am showing you how you can have cognitive control over something like your heart rate as a proxy of your overall psychological state. So you're going from psychology to physiology to go right back to psychology, and by showing these athletes this on the screen, for people like me, it becomes undeniable now.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Because it's not just like, do you feel more calm? Do you feel more alert or whatever we do. And

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we're saying, "Look at these electrical signals in your heart or your brain."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
"And they're a match." And so when you said you drew it on the whiteboardYou were drawing what you wanted their heart rate to be, gave them no instructions about that, had them close their eyes. They did this thing and they came back and saw their heart rate was exactly what-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... you want it to be.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You did not... You were not telling them, "Hold for three, exhale for two." Th- none of that was occurring, right? So to be really clear, 'cause I know people are gonna hammer us in the questions about this one, what was the breathing protocol you gave them? Is this the same for everybody? Does that part even matter?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
We test different ones, but the, the foundation for it and the basis for it is roughly a 10-second breath cycle from start to finish, roughly.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Five in, five out.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Ah, four in, six out.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Four in, six out. Little bit of extended exhale-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... to help kind of bring back down.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Just brings the, brings the heart rate down.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And why four to six? Why 10 second? Why not longer? Where did that number come from?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Well, that's, that's what they found to have the greatest impact on coherence, on HRV coherence. That's what they've... They tested a lot of different ways of doing it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Walk me through what, what's HRV coherence and why does that matter?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What's, what's a rough...?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Coherence is the balance between the sympathetic and the s- parasympathetic nervous system. And so we can look at two things. We can look at the pattern. Is it consistent in it regulating up and regulating down? And we can also look at the, the distance between the peak and the valley of that cycle, and that gives us an indication of how strong that is. And I wanna make sure that it's not about us or me proving anything to the athletes. It's about here's a tool, and this is what happens. If you use this tool or even attempt to use this tool, this is what's happening, and if this happens, then this is what's gonna happen with respect to performance or how you feel. And that's a really, really important piece of that thing. So that, that four in, six out is a way that we found has been the way to regulate that coherence between the sympathetic and nervous system in a most balanced way.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Somewhere between four and six seconds is probably what you'll find most people's resident breathing-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... frequency at. I'm generally seven and a half to eight.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Mine's a lot higher. Doesn't mean positive or negative or anything's there. Have you seen the same thing, most people, like, between four and six seconds?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Is, is that line up?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. And, and we have a, we have a program where we can adjust it and we can see what... And so they could actually follow this dot, and as long as it's going up, they breathe in, and as long as it's going up, then e- they don't have to brea- they don't have to count to do it. And that's when we can kinda find out, okay, this seems to be, like, the pattern that works best for you. But we don't wanna rely on them seeing that in the competitive environment, so we turn it into a counting, right?

Dr. Andy Galpin
The first time I saw you do it was, I think there was a computer program you used where I think it was just to pull socks on somebody or a heart rate monitor.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And the only instructions you gave this person was there was a screen, and it was a picture of some landscape in black and white.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And all you said was something like, "Make the screen get color."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And I think, and please fill me in if I was wrong here, what was happening was the software program was interpreting when the, either the heart rate was lower or the HRV was higher, he would bring more screens on the color.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Or color on the screens. And then if it did the opposite, it would start getting black and white again. So the athlete was just watching it, had no idea what... Like, he was like, "What am I doing here?" And you just, like, wouldn't tell him anything.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And all of a sudden he was like, "Oh, the screen. Co-" Then he lost focus and then went right back to it and then started to realize... And I don't think he even had any idea what he was doing internally.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
He was just watching the screen and eventually was like, "I get it, I get it, I get it." And I was like, "Oh." Because that to me felt like a transferable skill.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Because he wasn't going, like, three in, hold for three.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Which I'm like, you can't do this in the middle of a meeting and things are f- you're freaking out-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Exactly

Dr. Andy Galpin
... on the traffic.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep.

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Dr. Andy Galpin
You have to have that endogenous regulation, which I thought was brilliant. So first of all, did I even get that correct? Is that how that thing worked?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You've got a phenomenal memory. So what happens is it's a, it's a-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Only of traumatizing events. And whenever I was in your lab, it was traumatic for me.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It was pretty traumatic because of my office, but, um-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Okay, there you go.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, so what was happening is that the heart rate pro- or sorry, the biofeedback was, program was measuring the coherence and the balance between the sympathetic nervous and-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... sympathetic, parasympathetic. And if it was in a state of high coherence, it would lead to the colors changing. And then if it came out of that, it would stop changing the color. Couple things with that. Number one, athletes need to do this because they'll find that the, the harder they try, the harder it gets. And sometimes-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, it is the worst, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, sometimes athletes just need to be, and they, they, they can't force it. They just have to allow it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, this is why we pull numbers from people a lot 'cause it actually is the worst. They're holding onto number patterns-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

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Dr. Andy Galpin
... and you're like, "Your heart rate's at 190." "What, what are we doing here?" Like-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... "You gotta get off of this."

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, so the hypercompetitive ones we can't do it with.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's great for them to see it, though.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yep.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's great for them to see it. Secondly with that is the mantra that I use a lot is, you know, when you're feeling it in that moment, you cannot control your performance until you can control yourself. And you can't do anything with yourself until you can first just change one thing, the simplest thing, the thing you're already doing, the thing you were never taught. It's the first thing you do when you w- when you're alive. It's the last thing you do before you die. Just do something with that. Now, let's do something thoughtful with it, and let's do something to take all that what's going on around here and just internalize a little bit to a sense of this is what regulation means. So I'm feeling nervous. I'm feeling... It goes back to the I'm gonna have a reaction, but what's next? What do I wanna do next? Well, in this case, I just wanna do some breathing. That's all I wanna do. And that can have a, a major impact, especially when it's coupled with them seeing it and then hopefully seeing it again. I'll always send them the, the graph. They love the graph-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... and the, and the picture of it and everything, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Are there any tools people can use at home that are similar to that? Is that commercially

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available software? Are there other ones that if they don't have a sports psychologist office to go to, uh, whether this is technology they can buy orSoftware programs, books, any ... If someone wanted to work on biofeedback directly, what, what do you like to tell people?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So I'm gonna hesitate with that. Fr- number one, I haven't looked into it for the layperson in a long time, and I have a feeling if I attempt to do that, I'm gonna either be wrong or lead some people down-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Okay, just tell us what you u- use or what your colleagues use maybe.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So this company is HeartMath and-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, yeah. HeartMath is the, the most popular one, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It is, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. HeartMath.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
HeartMath, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Exactly like it sounds, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
They have the more expensive sorta full desktop products. They've got some in-the-field stuff you can use. There's a program that you can get called Inner Balance, and that's where it's very much activated with the phone and v- a lot less expensive than some of the more lab-type equipment that you might get. Inner Balance is something I would look into. They have the in-the-field stuff that you can pair with your phone or your iPad or whatever and you can do stuff. Those are probably the two that I know best right now. I, I, I would've needed to take a little bit of time before I made any sort of public recommendations about what other options there are. I just don't-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... look through those things.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Fair. Uh, Neurotracker?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
So Neurotracker i- i- I'll, I'll get ... Sometimes it feels weekly. I'll get these cold calls, emails, LinkedIn messages, "Hey, we have this co- brain training thing. Could we test it to you? Can we send you this product?"

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
And I turn almost all of them down, and for years and years and years, I haven't-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Knowing you for how long I've known you, that's, that, that's very funny to me 'cause I'm like, "Oh, I'm sure you're turning it ... I know you are." Like I, I, and I know how that turn down probably looks.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Neurotracker is a program, and I'm not in any way paid by them, affiliated with them at all, um-

Dr. Andy Galpin
You buy it at normal prices.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Neurotracker is a program-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Maybe you won't have to buy anymore after this podcast, but go ahead

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... that has been a wonderful tool, and it in essence helps the brain adapt to two things with respect to our focus and attention. One is selective attention, so in the presence of any number of stimuli in our environment, what do we wanna focus on and what do we wanna not focus on and ignore? So selective attention is massive in sports in which you've got officials in stands, and rain, and all these things. You gotta, you need to be able to be really, really locked in on only the stimuli in your environment that's gonna help you perform, and then in the presence of other ones, learn to ignore it. So selective attention and then sustained attention, the ability to focus over time. Those are two massive things in a lot of sports. Neurotracker is a program that an

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athlete can do to get better at both focusing on only those things in their mo- them environment they wanna focus on and ignore the others and do it over time. And what this looks like then is that you'll sit in front of a screen and you have 3D goggles on, glasses, and there are eight targets on the screen. They look like tennis balls. They're circles. Four of them highlight momentarily and the highlight disappears, and then all eight targets move around the screen in 3D space. They go up, down, side to side, front and back for eight seconds and then all the targets stop and then each target has a different number from one to eight, and the performer has to call out the four numbers of the targets that they think were initially highlighted. Is this ... Are you familiar with this at all? Have you ever seen this before?

Dr. Andy Galpin
I've never seen it done.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Okay.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I've seen you use various light, uh, tools and tactics and boards and things like that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
This, this is a different one from what we had at Fullerton, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, and goggles where you can see, uh, that have cameras-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... shooting back into people's eyes.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's right.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So you can see where they're paying attention to.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah, this is a little different.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I remember all these old tools.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Uh-huh. Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
You used to have a lot of fun stuff in your lab, and I used to be so mad 'cause your lab was three times the size of mine.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, you so deserved that lab space.

Dr. Andy Galpin
God, it was the worst.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Literally the perfect spot for me.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You totally, you totally did.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And you ruined it all.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
But we had decades of yoga sweat in the carpet- ... so there was a bit of a trade-off. Okay, let's get refocused again. So eight targets on the screen, four are highlighted, highlights disappear for eight seconds, the targets move around, they stop, the performer using ... call out the four numbers of the targets that were originally targeted. If they get any one wrong, the next trial goes slower. If they get all four correct, the next trial goes faster. There's 20 trials in a single session. Takes six minutes start to finish, and it gives you a very, very specific score. It gives you a number of data that I really love, but it gives you a score called the adaptive speed threshold, and that score indicates the speed at which the targets are going that you can correctly get four targets half the time. That's what that number is. Most important thing. So I have athletes who come into my office and who do this, and it's, um, phenomenal the improvement they see, number one. In some sports I will never propose use this 'cause it's not, it doesn't benefit them, but think about, like, tennis, think about a goalkeeper in soccer, right? Like, processing all that information and having to track information, and the ball gets behind three opponents and now they lose it for a moment, and, like, some of the transferability is massive, number one. Number two, the regularity with, with which they're in my office opens up the door for all kinds of other-

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Dr. Andy Galpin
Mm-hmm, mm-hmm

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... conversations that with some athletes would have maybe never happened if we didn't have that first sort of thing. So the Nur- Neurotracker is another really great tool I think, and then Neurotracker claims that any improvements in your score are actual changes in the brain. I suppose- ... that we talk a lot about when you get distracted, when does it occur? When do you miss a trial? "Oh, I'd ... Right at the very beginning. That's when I lose it." "Tell me about your sleep recently," or, "Do you have finals?" Or, "Do you have..." Like, you can, you can get so much into what's happening in their life when the Neurotracker scores are lower than what you might, might normally expect. And then you can sorta dive into now, "Okay, tell me about what's going on here." And it usually indicates, oh, we gotta do something different in our lives to be able to get better sleep or focus better, manage the situation better, or, you know, midterms are gonna be over next week, so you're gonna be in it right now and you can recover. So I've just found that as another really great tool, um-To be able to give immediate feedback on cognitive processes that are happening and some of the tools and techniques that athletes can use to get better at those things.

Dr. Andy Galpin
We've been tinkering around with this program we call Brain Gains for probably a year and a half now. We were doing it, and I had a bunch of my friends in my CAL you pilot. We're doing like a 10-week pilot study on it, and zero of my friends did it. Like, no, everyone signed up, everyone got the stuff, they did the baseline testing, and then no one would do the training. And I was trying to figure out, why won't these people do... And myself, I was just like struggling to get myself to go through it. And I realized, because when I do that fifteen to twenty minute session, and it's not the same setup as the one you mentioned, but it's very, very similar, where you have to pay tremendous attention. You get a little bit physically fatigued-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... but you have to pay tremendous attention. And I-- it snapped in my brain very recently, oh, I'm afraid of being cognitively tired.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And I'm like, it has nothing to do with me 'cause I'm like, "Oh, I just don't have time," blah, blah,

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blah. And I'm like, no, no, no. And my friends, I'm totally projecting on them, but I, I think it was the same thing 'cause I kept-- I started asking them, "Why aren't you doing it?" "Oh my God, I'm so excited about it. I wanna do it. All these things are coming." I'm like, oh, it's the fact that when you strap into this thing, it's, it's like fifteen minutes long.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You just know it. Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's g- you're gonna be so tired because you have to stay so focused, and there's very few times in our lives where you have to force cognitive focus. Right now when I'm working, I will land in that spot, but I, I can roll into it if I want. Like, I can brake, I can s- there's no braking that thing. And I realized after I'd done it a few times, I'm like, oh, I'm avoiding this fatigue. I'm just avoiding the mental fatigue that comes with this thing that I know is... It's like, it's like saying, "I'll do a crossword puzzle," starting a timer, and not giving yourself any chance to do anything until you finish it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Once you start, you know you have to finish.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And it sucks, and I... That is when this aspect of mental fatigue hit me. And then it also hit me going, oh, I see the v- tremendous value here. M- most of my coaching, of course, is on the physical side. And so thinking, how much are we seeing physical fatigue just being a manifestation of this person is very tied with paying attention-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... right now. And you've done some stuff on things like that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What is film session? What do study sessions look like? How do we make those things more

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effective, uh, less fatiguing when we know, um, s- I'm assuming the, the Neurotracker tool itself is-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... probably a good way to do that. But are there other maybe quick tips or tools that the average person can use if either they're in a sport where they're doing a lot of film session or, like, kind of the men- not, you know, actually tactics, or those in other settings where you're just like the cognitive fatigue of, of your job, your life is, oh. How do we make that training session more effective and less fatiguing?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm. I'm gonna tell you something that I think is super powerful that is not related to that-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Great

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... team session. Okay?

Dr. Andy Galpin
Well, you're in charge, so you, y- yeah. A- ask a better question and give me a better answer.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
No, no, no, no. So A-R-T, attention res-restoration theory. Humans spend most of their day distracted.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I totally believe that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Or their attention being pulled in a hundred different directions or in a state of cognitive fatigue. Because usually how people take breaks is to just look at their phone and scroll and more cognitive fatigues. Humans don't do a really good job of restoring their, their attention. And there's a theory of, uh, attention restoration theory, where if you just take a very short walk in a natural setting, just that three to five minutes of that, doing not with your phone on, not, not with music on, just you walking and coming back, you will have had a tremendous restoration of your ability to cognitive focus, and your cognitive figa- fatigue goes down significantly. If you are a listener and you're thinking about how that re- re- um, how that plays out in your day-to-day job, if you can find, instead of just using that time to go on Instagram, just put your phone and go walk somewhere outside with trees or something and come back, it's a massive way of doing it.

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So that's a, a relatively new concept, I think, of using outdoor spaces to walk and clear our mind from that cognitive fatigue that most humans have access to. When it comes to, like, something like film sessions, gotta break it up. It should not be too long. I know film sessions go anywhere from-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Oh, my

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... thirty minutes to an hour.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I played college football. We were, I would say sixty minutes would've been on a short side.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. It's just way too long.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Sixty, ninety minutes.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You gotta do-

Dr. Andy Galpin
And this is post practice, post shower-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... post dinner.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You're all over it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's over.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
You're all over it.

Dr. Andy Galpin
It was just-

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Do it before.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Do it before you're physically tired. Do it in small segments. Ask a lot of questions versus just, like, throwing it all at them. Like, engage with them. Enga- do it, approach it like you would as a professor or teacher.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Teacher, yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Have someone come up and explain. Like, engage them as much as possible. You don't see that a lot. You see a lot of the coaches-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Never

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... just-

Dr. Andy Galpin
It's always info dump

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... over and over again, and the, you just sit there. And number one, you're gonna be a little bit more focused 'cause you're gonna be on your toes knowing the coach is about to ask me a question. That's a brilliant strategy. But number two, it keeps them engaged. You just don't see that. You gotta build that engagement in somehow. And the athletes are capable of doing it, right? You, I believe you need to also have footage that's positive and that builds the athlete's confidence. I think most film sessions, they walk out of there, and it's all the stuff they did bad-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... or all the other team, what they're doing good-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Hundred percent

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
... and almost none of the positive stuff. So you've gotta build a motivational tool into it and somehow embed in, kinda like the three-two-one approach. Like, I would, I would consider that a very similar approach to it. Um, the film session stuff is, is big. My office at Cal is right across from the film room where a lot of our teams do itAnd I just, I hear it. I'm right across the office from them, and there's some great sessions. There's some coaches that do it really well, and there's also some coaches that just go, wow, that's twice as long as they're probably capable of really paying attention.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What's the time here? Is this twenty minutes? Is this an hour? Like, what's the number-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I would do more frequent, shorter ones if I could do-

Dr. Andy Galpin
Do pre- and post-practice for twenty minutes each or something like that.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
If you can.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah. That makes sense.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Some, some teams do two days a week.

Dr. Andy Galpin
If someone has listened to all this and thought, "Wow, this is a really interesting field," whether I am a sport coach, again, it doesn't matter, right? Because if you are going over game film or if you're teaching someone at your company a workshop-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Mm-hmm

Dr. Andy Galpin
... the exact same principles-

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Of course, yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... apply here, right?

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What kind of person, what kind of qualifications, what are the right terms, where can they learn more? Help people that are, wanna tinker in this field, m- what to avoid, what's, what's the not real stuff. You get what I'm trying to say here.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I do, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
What organizations, where-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Sure

Dr. Andy Galpin
... and without being elitist, of course, but-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Of course, yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... you get it.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
If you're looking for mental health provision, then you need to work with a clinical psychologist. Then you need to work with somebody who has the licensure in clinical psychology, whether they have sport-related training or not, and that's a really important thing.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah, 'cause some clinical psychologists will also work with sport.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
That's correct.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Yeah.

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Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yep. But those people also need to have the training and certifications in sport settings, so the mental performance piece is the, the gold standard certification is the CMPC. It's a Certified Mental Performance Consultant certification.

Dr. Andy Galpin
So that is a legitimate certification.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Oh, yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
That, that is very rigorous. That's not a weekend-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
No, no, no, no, no. You need a master's degree from accredited university. You need to be able to get supervised with a certain number of hours. You need to be able to pass the testing to do so.

Dr. Andy Galpin
This is very akin to being a, a physical therapist.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah. You need to attend professional conferences to maintain your certification.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Say that one more time, just what that one is.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
It's the Certified Mental Performance Consultant certification. It's the Association for Applied Sports Psychology. They offer that. I'll say a couple things. Just in the thirty years I've been in the field, I've seen a lot of trends. I think one of the trends I've seen is that in the past, people who wanted to get work in this field needed to get clinical licensure and mental health provision because the NCAA, that's all they were really hiring, for example, and professional sport teams were hiring licensed psychologists. And, um, we still need that, and if somebody has an interest in working in mental health, and we need good people to do those things, and we need that support. But we also have a lot of people who wanna do performance-based, performance psych, mental performance, and those people should be able to do that without having to go and get licensure and mental health training. And, and so I'm seeing the pendulum shift towards that for people who wanna go into that, who wanna get a master's degree or a PhD in that field, who wanna get certification, who wanna do the work to get it. We need more positions. Um, I wasn't gonna promote Cal, but I think what we're doing at Cal is a phenomenal model for what this

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could look like. If a s- student athlete I'm working with needs mental health support, we've got a team of people we can refer them to. We're there for the performance and the sport wellbeing of our student athletes. And if more universities could hire that model, people who wanna work with coaches, people who wanna be at practice, people who wanna be in the rain with our, our men's rowing team, pe- then they should be, there should be more opportunities for those things to happen, and I'm hoping people hear that.

Dr. Andy Galpin
I know that people are gonna walk away from this with a ton of, of practical, tactical tools as well as, I hope, a just a broader understanding of what this field really actually is and the opportunities in front of us. If we look across the landscape of high performance, sports or not, there's a couple of areas that to me are really underserved. Sleep is a big one of them, and this is part and parcel to that. You just do not see enough high performance groups-

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah

Dr. Andy Galpin
... adopting real true specialists in these areas in my opinion. So I, I thank you for all that information. I know that people are gonna get a lot from that. Uh, it was great to see you again. It's been a long time.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Yeah.

Dr. Andy Galpin
And, uh, yeah, it's been a true pleasure, man, so thank you so much for everything you've done and for, uh, the great information and for all the years of friendship.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
I miss you, and I'll see you in ten years.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Ah, my friend.

Dr. Lenny Wiersma
Cheers.

Dr. Andy Galpin
Thank you for joining for today's episode. My goal as always is to share exciting scientific insights that help you perform at your best. If the show resonates with you and you wanna help ensure this information remains free and accessible to anyone in the world, there are a few ways that you can support. First, you can subscribe to the show on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple, and

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