



Power Of Play





Power Of Play

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Power of Play



The Youth Sports Alliance
provides life-changing access to
sports for the next generation

Power of Play



Dr. Michael Larson

Professor of Clinical Psychology,
Cognitive and Behavioral
Neuroscience



Dr. Matthew Seeley

Professor of Human Biomechanics,
co-founder of the Strong Youth
Project



Dr. Carrie Jaworski

President-Elect, American College
of Sports Medicine
Medical Director, Sports Medicine
Wasatch Back & UOLF
Associate Director of Sports
Performance

Power of Play



Dr. Michael Larson

PhD Sports Psychology

- Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience Center at Brigham Young University (BYU).
- Obtained a MS and PhD in Clinical Psychology with a focus on Neuropsychology from the University of Florida.
- Dr. Larson runs a clinical service specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of concussion and other neuropsychological disorders.
- He is a member of the BYU Basketball Team's performance enhancement staff.
- Dr. Larson has published over 130 peer-reviewed manuscripts and is the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Psychophysiology.
- He believes in the importance of positive youth sports experiences and the impact of youth sports experiences on psychological health and relationships.



FLYING IN FORMATION: Anxiety and Performance in Sports

Michael J. Larson, PhD

Strong Youth Project, Brigham Young University
Larson Performance and Neuropsychology, PLLC



“
**I'VE NEVER BEEN AFRAID OF
BIG MOMENTS. I GET
BUTTERFLIES. I JUST TELL
THEM TO FLY IN
FORMATION**

STEPHEN CURRY



Flying in Formation

1. Thoughts → Feelings → Behaviors
2. Create Room for Different Thoughts
3. Tips for Managing Performance
Anxiety
4. Control the Controllable

1

Thoughts → Feelings → Behaviors

THOUGHTS CREATE FEELINGS

How do we look at our thoughts?



SITUATION

Elimination tournament game.



THOUGHTS

“Huge game.
Lose and
done.”

“Opportunity to
play. Excited”



FEELINGS

Tension/Anxiety

Focused/Excitement

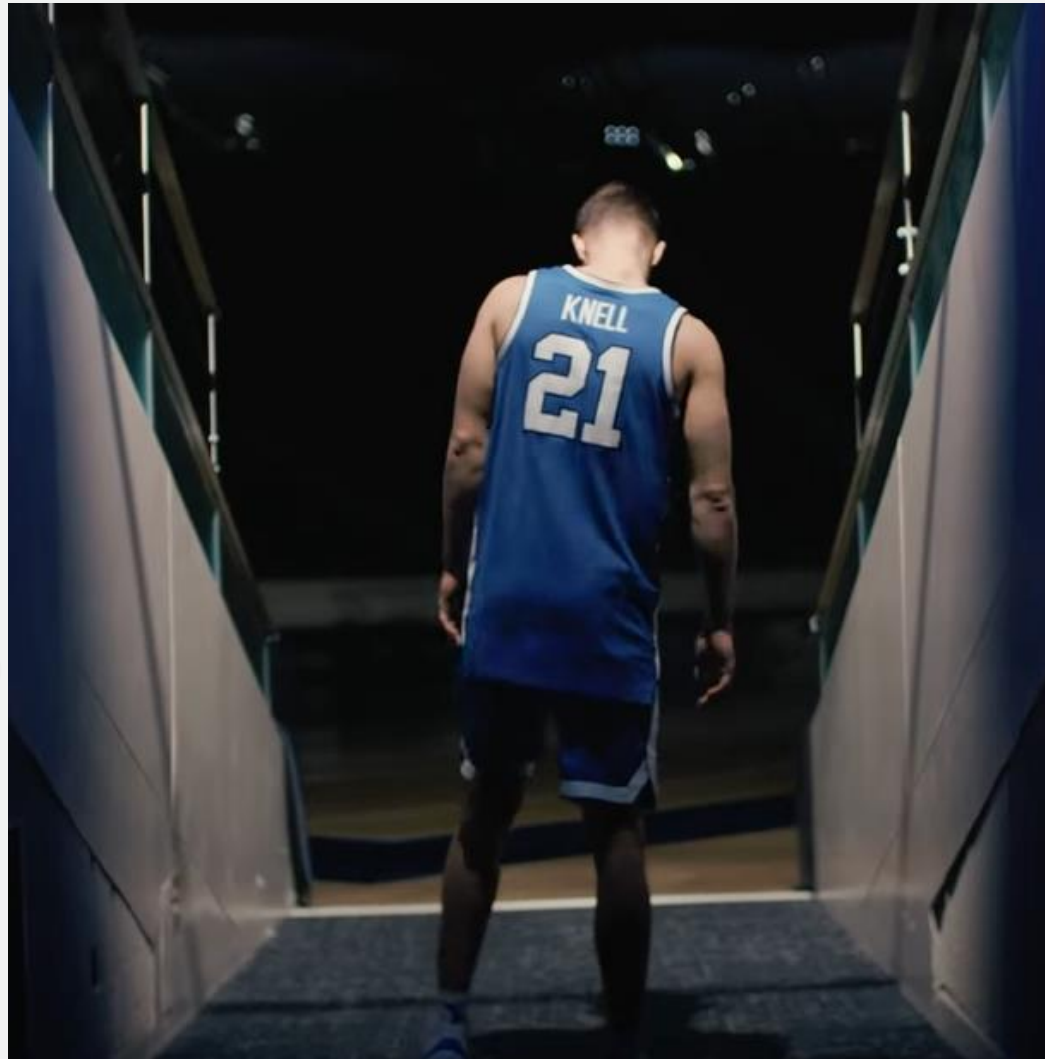
THOUGHTS CREATE FEELINGS

Thoughts → Feelings

- *It is the way we think about events, not the events themselves, causes our feelings.*
- Thoughts are a lens through which to look at events.
- A positive lens → positive feelings
- A negative lens → negative feelings

Fear vs. Confidence

Trevin Knell: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGzZ7pNbOxg>



"It's
thro

elf."

- Steph Curry

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS CHANGE BEHAVIORS

Thoughts → Feelings → Behaviors

- *FEAR vs CONFIDENCE*
- Fear: Focus on what you DON'T want to happen
 - I don't want to miss or don't want to lose
- Confident: Focus on what you WANT
 - I want the ball. I'll practice to improve.

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS CHANGE BEHAVIORS

What is Performance Anxiety?

- *A negative emotional state that occurs in the absence of real/obvious danger in response to a competitive stressor.*
- Fear-based: Anticipating a situation as a threat/failure

Pregame Jitters: Friend or Enemy?

- Normal response to competition—Your body is getting ready
- Excitement vs. Anxiety: Excitement and nerves feel the same in your body—racing heart, butterflies, energy

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS CHANGE BEHAVIORS

Pregame Jitters: Friend or Enemy?

- The difference is how you interpret it.
 - Nervous = 'I'm not ready. What if I fail?'
 - Excited = 'I'm ready! I can't wait to compete!'
- Your mindset determines how you experience these feelings.

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS CHANGE BEHAVIORS

Pregame Jitters: Friend or Enemy?

- Remind yourself: 'This is my body getting ready to perform!'
- Use power phrases like 'I'm excited!' instead of 'I'm nervous.'
- Focus on what you love about your sport—channel the energy.
- Breathing and visualizing success.

THOUGHTS & FEELINGS CHANGE BEHAVIORS

PERSPECTIVE

- *Situation:* Big Tournament Game—Lose or go home
- *Discuss:* What is your approach? Same as every other game? Turn up the intensity in practice and warm-ups? How do you work with your emotions?

2

Create Room for Different Thoughts

CREATING ROOM FOR DIFFERENT THOUGHTS

Try not to think...



- BRAIN does not hear “not” or “don’t”
- Imagine yourself running or playing a sport you love.
- **Now....DON’T think about tripping or falling.**
- How did it go? What did you notice?

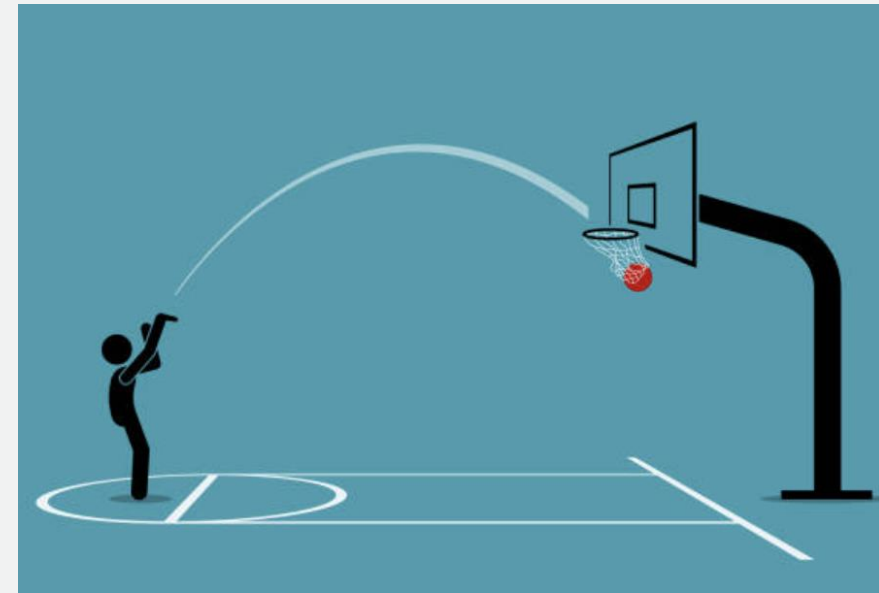
CREATING ROOM FOR DIFFERENT THOUGHTS

Focus on ACTION words

1. The brain tends to focus on the main action word in a sentence
2. "Don't miss the shot" → The brain processes "miss the shot" because "miss" is the action word.
3. "Make the shot" focuses on the action you want

CREATING ROOM FOR DIFFERENT THOUGHTS

Visualize the Action



1. The brain creates mental images

When you say, “don’t fall”, the brain visualizes falling

2. Visualize what you want

When you say, “stay balanced”, the brain visualizes balance and control

CREATING ROOM FOR DIFFERENT THOUGHTS

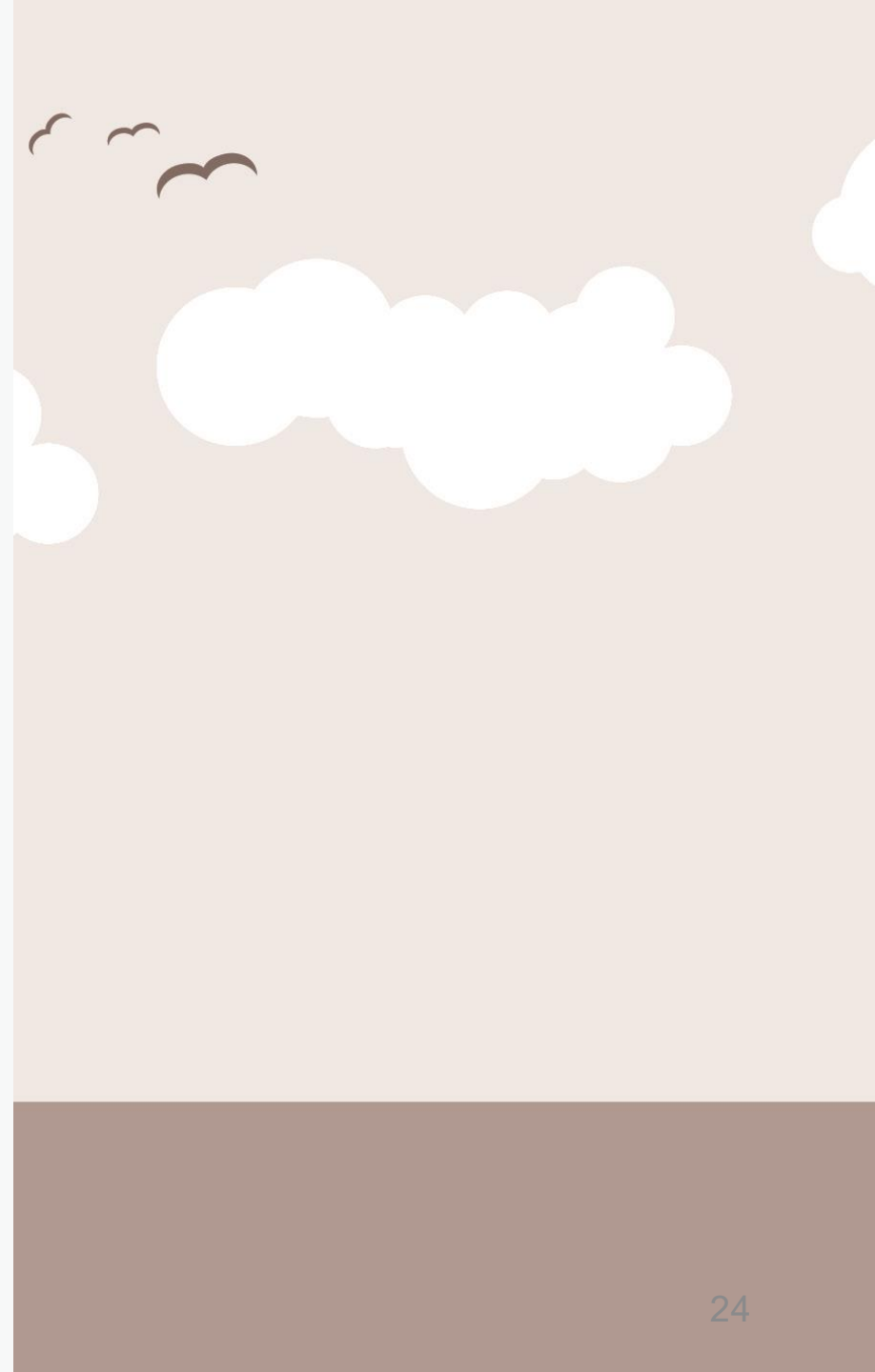
Getting rid of negative thoughts

1. Takes a lot of effort
2. Often paradoxical: more thoughts
3. Even if successful, rebound at a later moment
4. We AREN'T trying to stop thoughts

CREATING ROOM FOR DIFFERENT THOUGHTS

Instead: Observe

1. Stop fighting or trying to control thoughts.
2. Treat thoughts like clouds as they come and go.
3. Observing thoughts creates room for more helpful thoughts.



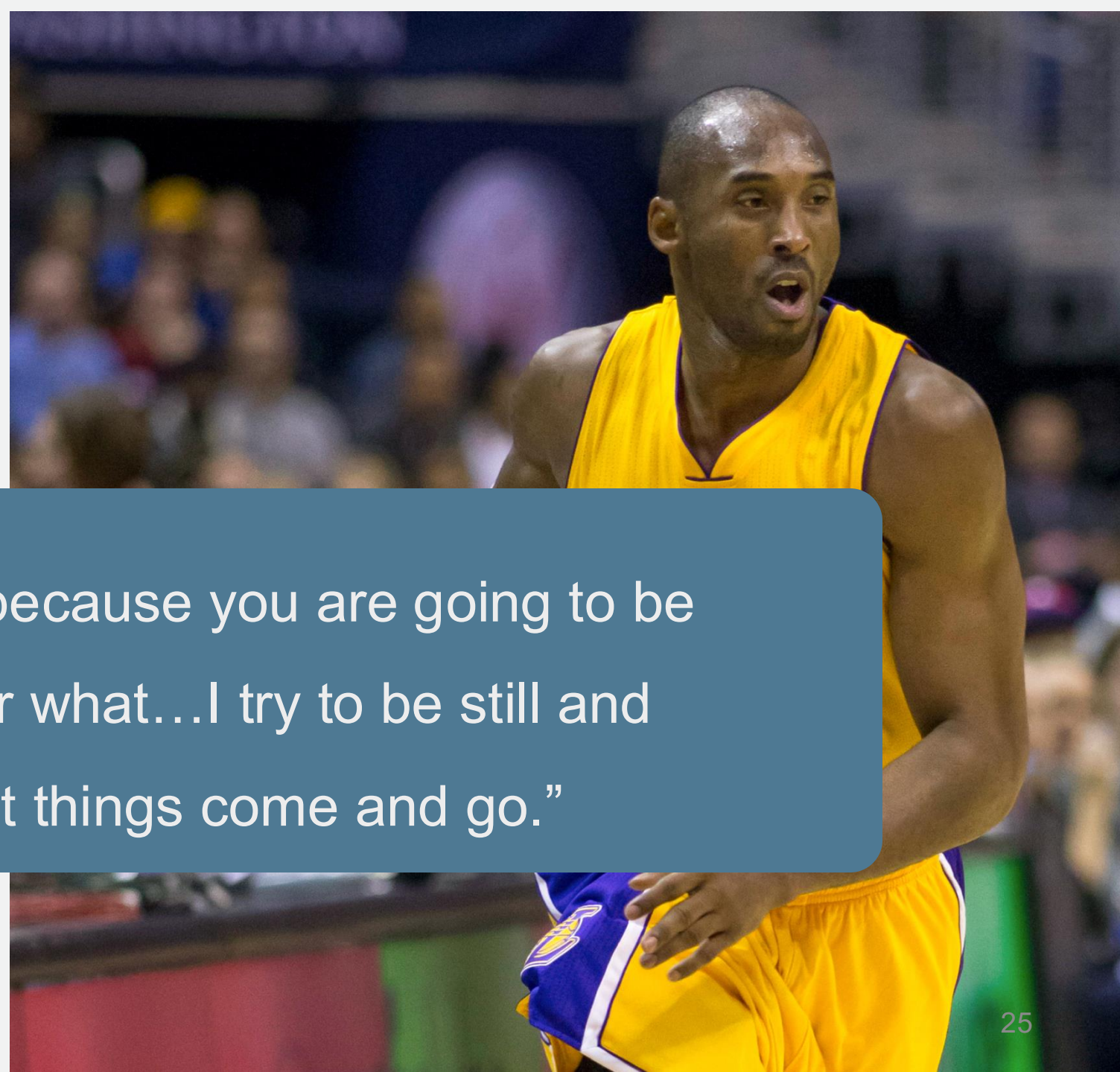
Observing Thoughts

Kobe Bryant

”

”It’s OK to fail because you are going to be loved no matter what...I try to be still and understand that things come and go.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lypjrtkqPk>



3

Tips for Managing Performance Anxiety

LOOK AT YOUR THOUGHTS

From unhelpful to helpful



LOOK AT YOUR THOUGHTS

Helpful: Reframe and Challenge

- **Reframe failure:** It's an opportunity to learn, not a judgment of worth.
- **Separate yourself** from your performance—failure doesn't define you.
- **Focus on the process**—trust your training and play freely.

THOUGHTS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE

1. Challenge appraisal

THREAT

“I got cut! How will I ever deal with this?”

fear, despair

VS.

CHALLENGE

“This will make me stronger.”

hope, strength

THOUGHTS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE

2. Benefit finding

- Choosing thoughts that allow you to see the positive side of a difficult situation
 - e.g., “I learned valuable lessons from this experience.”
 - e.g., “This season taught me to appreciate my teammates and the effort we put in together.”

THOUGHTS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE

2. Benefit finding



Benefit finding does not mean that you only interpret an event in terms of benefits. You see both the positives *and* the negatives.

THOUGHTS THAT BUILD RESILIENCE

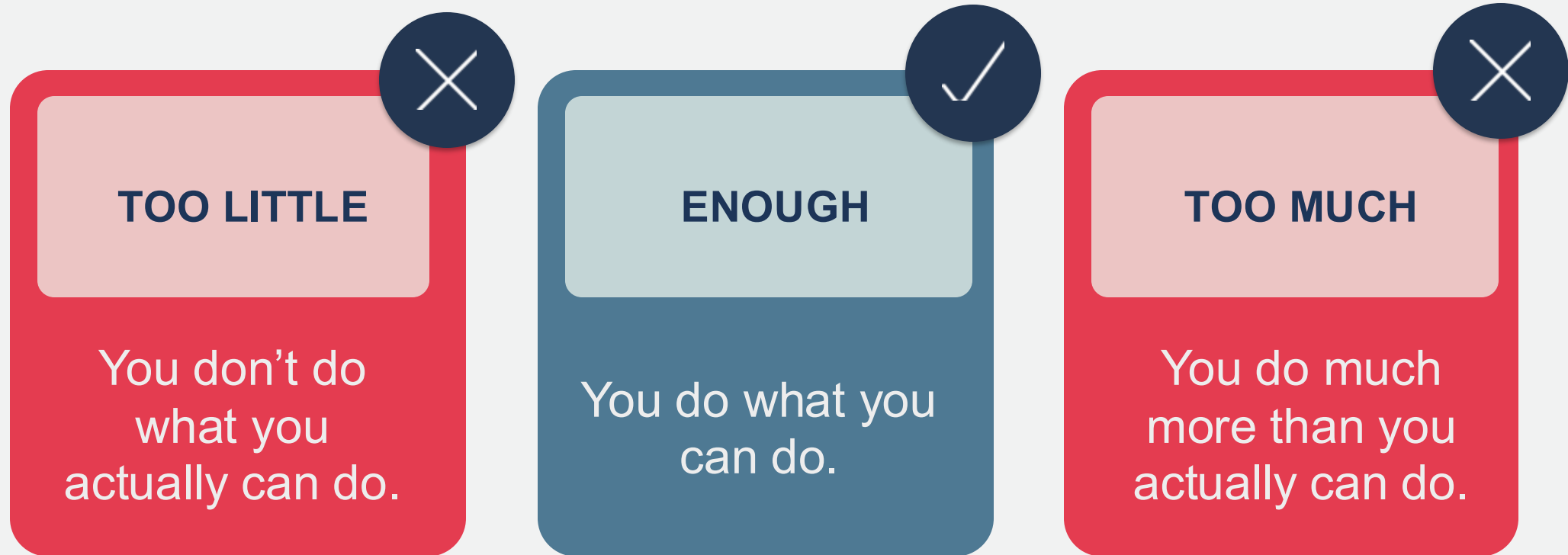
3. Optimism

- Expecting good things to happen to us
 - e.g., “I got it wrong this time, but I’ll succeed next time.”
 - e.g., “Good things are just around the corner.”

4

Control the Controllable

3 Types of Control



Too Little Control

Stressful event	Lack of control
You think the coach should play you more.	You complain about your role instead of working to improve.

Too Much Control

Stressful event	Too much control
Your team is on a losing streak, and the pressure to win the next game is intense.	You lose sleep thinking and trying to plan for every possible thing to control the outcome.

Effective Control

TAKING ACTION

Do something practical to help manage stressful events.

OR

Accept

Accept there is nothing you can do to change the situation.

Control the Controllable

Stressful event	Action
You feel anxious before a big game in front of a large crowd.	You take a moment to step aside, do your routine, and visualize successful plays.

Times to Accept

Stressful event	Surrender
Your coach informs you that your role on the team is changing, and you may not be a starter anymore.	You accept the new role and adjust your mindset to stay motivated.

Stay in the Moment

- You cannot change the past nor control the future.
- Focus on the only place where you have control: the present moment.

“

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BIG MOMENTS. I GET
BUTTERFLIES. I JUST TELL
THEM TO FLY IN
FORMATION**

STEPHEN CURRY



Flying in Formation

1. Thoughts → Feelings → Behaviors

- Confidence-based; excitement

2. Create Room for Different Thoughts

- Observe thoughts; action words

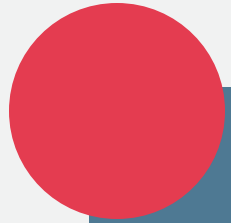
3. Tips for Managing Performance Anxiety

- Challenge, reframe, separate your worth, focus on the process

4. Control the Controllable

Private and Group

Interested in Sport Psychology?



Larson Performance and Neuropsychology, PLLC

Contact: 801-422-6125

Email: michael_larson@byu.edu

Power of Play



Dr. Matthew Seeley

PhD, ATC, Strong Youth
Project Co-director,
Biomechanics

- Dr. Seeley has BS and MS in Exercise Sciences from Utah State University and holds a PhD in Exercise Sciences (Biomechanics) from the University of Kentucky.
- Matthew Seeley, one of the co-founders of the Strong Youth Project.
- He has taught courses and conducted research in the BYU Exercise Sciences Department since 2006. His research has focused on factors affecting knee cartilage health, lower-extremity movement biomechanics and knee joint biochemistry.
- Dr. Seeley is also passionate about improving youth sport experiences, for all participants; Dr. Seeley believes that a positive sport experience for youth can contribute to joint health and overall wellness for youth, and a stronger society overall.

Stronger, longer: The Strong Youth Project

Matt Seeley PhD ATC FACSM
BYU Dept of Exercise Sciences
BYU Strong Youth Project
matt_seeley@byu.edu



BYU BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

Strong Youth Project.

Why and what?



The Team



STRONG YOUTH PROJECT

BYU BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

ADVISORY TEAM

Matthew Seeley, PhD, ATC

Justin Yee, BS

Zack Beddoes, PhD

Anthony Beutler, MD

William Christensen, PhD

Sarah Coyne, PhD

Chad Hancock, PhD

Brian Halley, BS

Carrie Jaworski, MD

Mike Jones, PhD

Devin Knighton, PhD

Michael Larson, PhD

Ulrike Mitchell, PhD, PT

Jenae Nelson, PhD

Brett Pexa, PhD, ATC

Jake Sorenson, PhD, CSCS

John White, PhD

Jason Whiting, PhD

Peter Williamson, BS

Co-director, Biomechanics

Co-director, Youth Sports Coaching

Physical Education

Sports Medicine

Statistics

Developmental Psychology

Exercise Physiology & Nutrition

Graphic Design & Creative Direction

Sports Medicine

Computer Science

Communications

Sports Psychology

Physical Therapy

Developmental Psychology

Athletic Training

Exercise Physiology, and Strength & Conditioning

Character Development

Marriage & Family Therapy

Youth Sports Coaching



Mission: Improve organized sport experiences for **youth**, parents, coaches, and other mentors via education and evidenced-based practice.

Aim 1. Communicate scientific evidence to youth sports stakeholders, including youth athletes, regarding factors affecting quality of youth sport experiences.

Aim 2. Conduct scientific **research** investigating issues that influence youth sport experiences.

Aim 3. Design and deliver evidence-based **training programs** to youth athletes, including digital delivery of these programs.

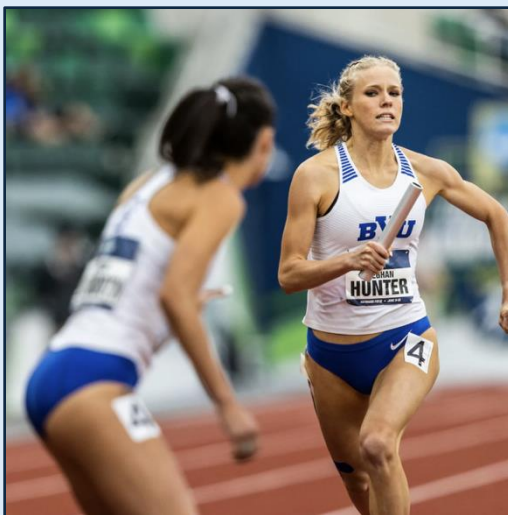
Aim 1. Communicate scientific information to all youth sports stakeholders



SYP Website



2025 Strong Youth Conference



2025 STRONG YOUTH CONFERENCE

Youth sports advocates (parents, coaches, administrators, etc) & adolescent athletes are invited to come & learn.



MAY 3 2025 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM

8:30-9:30 AM: Light Breakfast & Introductions

9:45-11:45 AM: Breakout Sessions

11:45 AM: Lunch & Networking

1:00-3:00 PM: Breakout Sessions

3:00-4:00 PM: Keynote and Concluding Remarks

BREAKOUT SPEAKERS & TOPICS

- Michael Davie RSCC*D CSCS & Braden Goimarac CSCS NASM-CPT. Strengthening Youth Athletes Physically (2 Sessions).
- Kary Woodruff PhD RD CSSD. Fueling Youth Athletes.
- Bobby Low PhD. Increasing Mental Fortitude for Youth Athletes.
- Sarah Pietruszka MD & Jonathan Jackson MD. Protecting Youth Athletes from Injury (Overuse Injury and Concussion, 2 Sessions).

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MEGHAN HUNTER



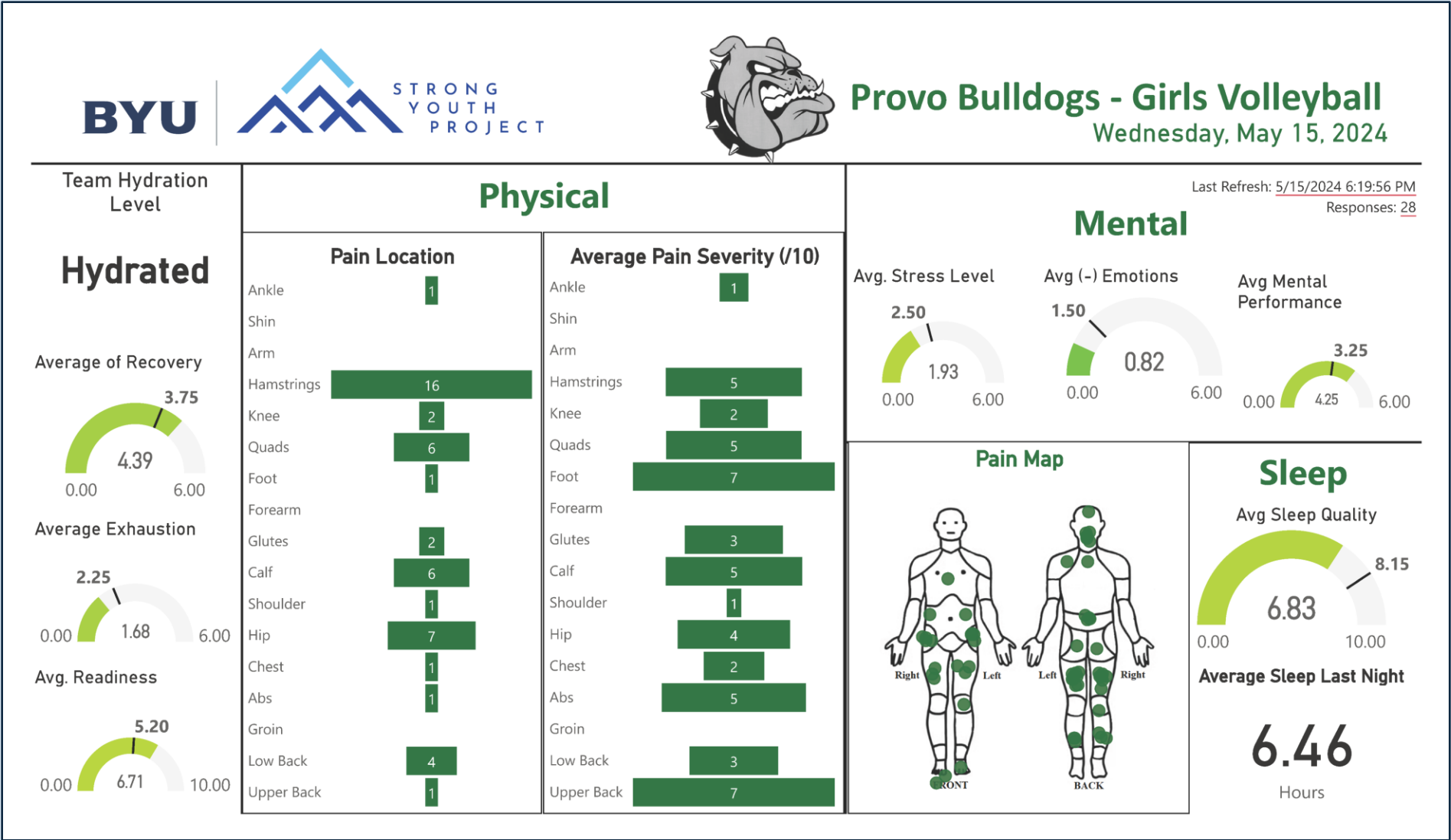
\$25 REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDES MEALS & SYP T-SHIRT

BYU CONFERENCE CENTER, PROVO, UT

Use the QR code to register→



Aim 2. Conduct original research



Aim 2. Conduct original research

BYU



BYU |  STRONG
YOUTH
PROJECT

Y SPORT

HIGHER PURPOSE & PERFORMANCE

A transformative two-day interfaith camp for high school athletes, featuring collegiate athletes, faith leaders, and athletic performance experts.

ABOUT THE EVENT:

Learn from BYU and Baylor University experts on how faith and character foster champions on and off the field, along with strategies to enhance athletic performance and reduce injury risk through:



Improved movement biomechanics



Improved mindset and mental health



Improved sports nutrition

May 30-31, 2025

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Brigham Young University

Regular Price: \$150

Early Bird Special: \$125
(by 3/15/2025)

Only 30 Spots Available!
Reserve yours now!



Summary

1. SYP is here to learn with you regarding best practices in youth sport, to improve youth sport experiences.
2. Stay in touch! matt_seeley@byu.edu



SYP
Website



SYP
Conference



Power of Play



Dr. Carrie Jaworski

President-Elect, American College
of Sports Medicine
Medical Director, Sports Medicine
Wasatch Back & UOLF
Associate Director of Sports
Performance

- Board-certified Family & Sports Medicine physician, serving as the Medical Director of Sports Medicine and Associate Director of Sports Performance at Intermountain Health Park City.
- Medical Director for FIS Para Nordic World Cup and International Biathlon Union World Cup.
- Former Head Team Physician and Director of Intercollegiate Sports Medicine for Northwestern University Athletics; provided medical coverage for multiple sporting events including Ironman World Championships, Chicago Marathon, and Olympic & Paralympic Games.
- Served as a physician at the Salt Lake Olympics (2002), Tokyo Olympic Games (2021), and Head Team Physician for the Paris Paralympic Games (2024), with a future role at the Milan-Cortina Olympic Games (2026).
- She enjoys outdoor activities, particularly running, hiking, and Nordic skiing.



From Start to Finish: Ensuring Youth Athletes Thrive at Every Stage

Carrie A. Jaworski, MD, FAAFP, FACSM
Director of Sports Medicine –
Intermountain Health Wasatch Back
UOLF Medical Director
President-Elect, American College of
Sports Medicine

Confidential and property of Intermountain Health

Our mission....

- To provide athletes of all ages with the resources to be active and healthy for a lifetime
- To serve as a resource for athletes in our community – through education, research and a comprehensive approach to care



Next level Sports Medicine care

Injury prevention goes
beyond just bone and joint
issues

Benefit of looking at mental
health, nutrition, recovery
and sleep

BALANCE is ESSENTIAL



Keep your head in the game!

- Focusing on winning and success defined as one's ability compared to others can lead to higher rates of depression
 - Unaddressed mental health issues can affect performance
 - Stress can lead to anxiety and negative feelings
- Reframe success as a focus on effort, improvement and teamwork
 - This leads to a lifelong enjoyment of sports/physical activity



Sports Medicine in the Wasatch Back

Mental Health Resources

- Athletic trainers at our high schools and events
- Sports Medicine physicians trained in comprehensive care of athletes
 - Referrals to sports psychologists, therapists and/or psychiatry
- Educational programming
 - Schools
 - Events with community partners





How to find me...

Carrie A. Jaworski, MD
Park City Sports Medicine & Sports
Performance
900 Round Valley Drive, Ste 110
Park City, UT 84060
435-333-3535



Power Of Play

Thank you to our sponsor and presenters



Scan the QR Code to find out more information from YSA, SYP and IHC





Power of Play, What's next?



Follow @YouthSportsAlliance, Strong Youth Project and @parkcityhospital on Social Media



On Instagram @youthsportsalliance, @strongyouthproject @intermountain



Next meeting August 2025



Feedback please email heather@ysausa.org