

Picking yourself up after non-selection

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In many sports, participation is based on being selected into a team. Even individual sports experience this, for example the selection of the Olympic team which will represent your country at the Olympics. You may have qualified to go to the Olympics but that does not yet guarantee you will be selected.

Amongst others, disappointment is often the expected experience following non-selection. Disappointment is an inevitable experience we will have at one point or another in our lives. Having effective ways of getting through such times will stand you in good stead. Let's look at how it works and apply it to a situation many athletes face in their careers.

We experience disappointment when the result does not match our expectation of what we wanted. You spend all the hours training your skills to be good enough to make the team, you may even have qualified for an event, and then you're not selected. This can cause a shift in your equilibrium; upset our psychological balance if you will. To restore balance action is often required.

As a first step we often have a primary appraisal of the situation. This represents your interpretation of the significance of the event. For example, is your initial interpretation of not being selected positive, offer relief, is it a set-back, is it final, or is it unfair? You may think about what this means for your short-term participation in the event or the impact on your long-term participation in the sport. You may consider what sacrifices have been made to get there or how this might impact others in your life. Some of you might be in a situation where it might impact your financial situation. All of these impact your interpretation of the significance of the event.

Then a secondary appraisal includes your judgment of the controllability of the situation and what resources you have at your disposal to address the disappointment. A sense of controllability may include your view of what role you had to play in your non-selection and what role others played in your non-selection. Whether there might be a second opportunity to be selected or the option of being selected for the next event or competition will have

an impact on how positive or negative you appraise the situation. Judgments regarding your resources for coping with the disappointment also play a role in your secondary appraisal. Social resources such as a support system or cultural resources such as the view that individuals in your family have always handled disappointment well will impact your appraisal and what consequent action you take to address the disappointment.

Following the levels of appraisal, coping efforts can be employed. These are the actual strategies you employ to navigate through the disappointment. Strategies can take the form of active or passive, referring to whether the strategy is based on confronting the situation or avoiding the situation. Different types of strategies can include:

- Problem strategies - aimed at addressing the non-selection situation directly. An example could be aimed at finding out more information about or gain understanding of the selection decisions.
- Emotional strategies - aimed at the regulation of emotions following the non-selection. This could include positive ways to vent the emotions, activities that might take your mind off, or discussing it with someone in your support system.
- Meaning strategies – aimed at changing the meaning of the event in your mind. This can induce more positive emotions and allows for more optimistic actions on your part.

We all have some general way we tend to deal with disappointment. You likely have learnt these over a long period of time and they are based on a combination of what you have observed from others and what you've experienced ourselves in the past. Some people also seem to get over disappointment very quickly while others take a bit longer. This may be due to your personal way of dealing with disappointment, but also due to the nature of the disappointing event.

Some methods that are sometimes used to positively deal with the disappointment of not being selected can include:

- Identify the opportunities in disappointing situations
- Good planning and decision making
- Finding motivation for future endeavours
- Using the humorous side of the situation
- Activities that take the mind off the situation
- Talk with friends and use social support system
- Use physical exercise to work through the feelings
- Seeking information about the situation
- Drawing on past experiences

