

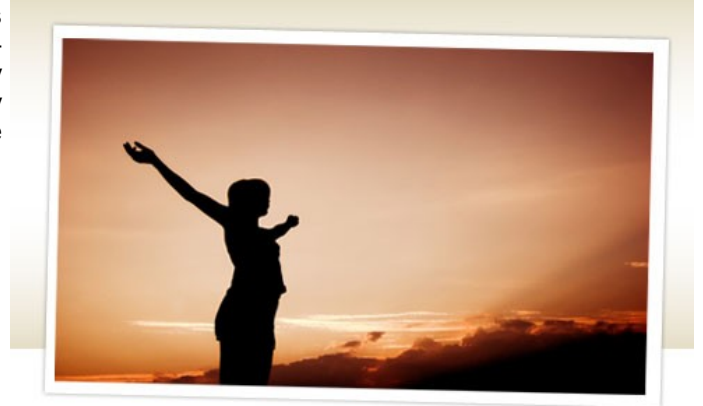
Beyond Sport: Life Balance

By Drew Mackenzie, Athlete and Coach Services Coordinator, Canadian Sport Centre Pacific

“Competing at the highest levels in sport requires a tremendous amount of time and energy each day dedicated to the pursuit of excellence. However, having ‘sport’ on your brain 24/7 is not healthy and may actually negatively impact your sport performance. It is very important for performance athletes to have goals in other areas of life beyond sport (school, career, family, relationships, hobbies, etc.) and to have appropriate outlets to pursue these interests.”

– Bruce Pinel, Sport Psychologist, Canadian Sport Centre Pacific

According to a Pre-Athens 2004 International Olympic Committee investigation into athlete development, one of the most commonly reported needs of elite athletes to maximize personal and performance development were maintaining balance in life, career and education opportunities.



Athletes should be able to live life with as much continuity and stability as possible on both social and professional levels. Taking this all-encompassing view of what an athlete needs to have success, below are some general guidelines for helping identify priorities and build life balance.

1. Identify your priorities

Clearly identifying your priorities is the first and most crucial step in attaining a well-balanced life. The important point here is to figure out what your priorities truly are, not what you think they should be. Take deliberate time to thoughtfully and honestly develop a list of your top five priorities.

2. Drop unnecessary activities

Achieving life balance means having equilibrium among all the priorities in your life – this state of balance is different for each individual. By comparing your current daily life with your top 5 priorities, you may discover you're devoting too much time to activities that aren't a priority, and you can adjust your schedule accordingly -- cutting back on television, for example.

The key is not only knowing your priorities, but devoting your full attention to just one priority at a time. Split your time and your mind so that you're thinking about school when you're at school and you're paying attention to the moment at hand when out training or visiting with family and friends. By truly honoring the different aspects of your life, such as school/work, play, and family, more success and fulfillment can be had in each area.

3. Protect your private time

Athletes play many different roles in their lives. For example, they may be employees, parents, spouses, children, friends, relatives and volunteers in their communities. Not surprisingly, it is easy to feel overwhelmed with these many roles. Carve out hours that contribute to yourself and your personal priorities. Protect this personal time avidly and don't let other distractions intrude.

4. Plan fun and relaxation – Make an appointment with yourself!

You would probably think twice before skipping a workout, a class, or a doctor's appointment. Your private time deserves the same respect. Until you get into the habit of taking time for yourself, set aside space in your schedule for relaxation and fun. Plan what you're going to do and make any necessary arrangements to ensure you'll be able to keep your commitment. No more "I don't have time for that." You are in charge of your own schedule -- it's up to you to make time

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