

# MAKE STRESS YOUR FRIEND

*“Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water. You put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.” - Bruce Lee*

Kelly McGonigal has a TedTalk and book where she talks about changing our relationship to stress. As athletes, we have all experienced stress and anxiety. And some of us may be more comfortable with it than others. Maybe stress is an inevitable part of life, especially when we are doing something that we really care about. What if we started to change our relationship with stress and instead of fearing or avoiding it, we began to welcome it and embrace what it brings to our life? What if we started to realize that our response to stress is actually a strength and it provides us with the focus and energy we need to be our very best?

Think of a recent experience where you were stressed. How could you tell you were stressed? What did you feel or notice? You may have seen this as a sign that you were not handling the stress well. Choose to rethink this as signs that your brain and body are trying to get you ready. If there is one sign or symptom that you really don't like, take a few minutes to think about its specific role in getting you ready to be your best. You are wired the way you are wired. Learn how you respond to stress, become familiar with it and start to embrace your response to getting ready to compete.

## Let's Turn Stress Around

- When you want to do well, instead of trying to relax, embrace the nerves and tell yourself you're excited, and ready to compete.
- Worry less about trying to make stress symptoms go away; and focus more on how you can use the extra energy to get ready to perform.
- When you are feeling overwhelmed, try to do something to help a teammate.
- Allow yourself to feel any thoughts or emotions that come up and remember that other athletes likely feel this way too. Maybe say a phrase that reminds you of this such as “May we all embrace the challenge” or “This is what we love about sport”.
- Think about a stressful past experience in which you made it through. Take a few minutes to think about what the experience taught you and what you learned from it.

Change your relationship with stress and start to embrace stress as a necessary part of your peak performance strategy. [Watch the Ted Talk here...](#)