

# LEARN TO GROW

*Our Monthly Newsletter*

## GOING FOR GOLD

*by Graeme Thompson*

The demands of elite sport are that athletes and teams are asked to provide their best performance on a regular level and often with a public profile. Having worked for 20 years in this area, leading three different team sports to World Cups, Olympics and Paralympics, I have seen how athletes have developed these skills. Few have them from the moment they first compete at a top level. It takes time and many of them talk about learning to be “comfortable about feeling uncomfortable”. Whilst technically they may know how to land the required shot for the win in Curling, or take the winning kick in Rugby League, doing it in a highly emotional setting of the Cup Final or the Olympics, including public and TV audiences, brings significant mental pressure, which can detract from their performance.

To develop the ability to deliver the right performance at the right time, they learn how to manage themselves to reduce the mental and emotional pressure they feel at the time.

In the world of High Performance Sport, this has been applied with coaches/athletes on visualisation techniques – engaging the athlete to describe what their best winning performance in the future will look, feel and ‘be’ like when in their ‘Performance Zone’. It encourages individuals to reflect on previous positive desired states and how this can be applied to future situations – so they can be in their ‘Performance Zone’ more consistently. Having the awareness to choose what state you want to be in no matter of how you are feeling or what situation you find yourself in

.The concept can be brought over into business, as there are peak moments for people to be at their absolute best. The investment pitch, the crucial strategy review and future planning and difficult conversations with others on their performances are examples.

The ‘Performance Zone’ is a performance coaching tool designed to help individuals/teams to anchor, enrich and re access desired states for improved performance. It focuses the coach/Leader to explore with the client/team member on a certain ‘way of being’ and to apply this certain state in all contexts.



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(continued)

Here are some steps to achieving your Performance Zone, whether as an individual or as a coach helping someone else to achieve it.

- Think of a resourceful state that you would like to experience more often. (this could be physically/emotionally/ a general feeling you had).
- Think of a time when you fully experienced that state.
- Imagine a circle/zone in a space on the floor in front of you and select colours, symbols or other cues that you would associate with that state.
- Step into that circle/zone, fully associating into the state and reliving the experience:
  - What do you : see through your own eyes? hear through your own ears? feel and sensations do you recognise?
  - What do you notice about the state/ what are you aware of?
- Enhance experience of the state by adding colours, shapes, symbols, movement, sounds or feelings
- Step out of the circle/zone and 'shake it off'
- Identify a situation when you would like to have that state and imagine yourself having that state in the future – (increasing/driving your performance forwards)
- Step back into the circle/zone and repeat step 4 – focusing on future situations and how you are feeling/being when in your 'Performance Zone '

Graeme Thompson is an associate of Learn to Grow. He has worked in elite sport for 20 years, including Rugby League, Water Polo and Curling/Wheelchair Curling. He is now an executive coach including being a Vistage Chair, which is leadership development peer groups.



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# Mindfulness & Time Management

Written by: Louise Couper, Associate Learn to Grow

Mindfulness and Time Management are hot topics at the moment. Companies are striving to ensure that their people are healthy (both physically and mentally) whilst also being as productive as humanly possible. Are these companies being over ambitious? Striving for the impossible? Not at all! However, employees WILL need some assistance in striking the ideal balance.

Here are 3 tips to get you started:

## 1. Move for Mental Health

Studies show that employees demonstrate better time management and interpersonal performance when they exercise in the morning and throughout the day. What might work for you? I enjoy an early morning run around my local woods before a busy day and even build physical exercises into my 'Zoom' training courses.

## 2. Enjoy Micro Mindful Moments

The benefits that meditation can have on our professional effectiveness and productivity are widely acknowledged but many people complain that they struggle to find the time to meditate. Fear not! By getting into the habit of creating 'micro mindful moments' regularly, throughout the day, you can enjoy the same benefits. Micro mindful moments are 5-25 second 'moments' where you consciously stop and focus. Where you are completely present in the moment and let the rest of the world and your thoughts just drift away. You might be admiring the houseplant or photo on your desk, taking note of all the details, colours and textures. You might be applying hand-cream and focusing your attention on the scent and how it feels on your skin.

## 3. Be Emotionally Aware

We all know how a tough meeting, a run-in with a colleague or a traffic jam has the potential to corrupt our mood and effectiveness for the rest of the day. But, how many of us stop and acknowledge the emotions that we are experiencing? In 'Emotional Intelligence' workshops, I frequently hear 'I don't have the time to stop and acknowledge my emotions' but that response simply amplifies the issue. Becoming more emotionally aware and being able to separate your emotions from your thoughts and actions will pay dividends in terms of effectiveness and productivity.



Want to know how we can help you to grow your people, then why not  
contact us on 07976 028132  
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# Mental Health & Nature

Nature's Gifts

Learn to Grow Lts





# Nature's Gifts



Nature is abundant with wellbeing remedies, and you don't have to be a master herbalist to benefit from them. The act of caring for plants is, in itself, a supportive, mindful experience – helping us to soothe stress and refocus our minds. But there are also many natural samples out there that come with their own wellness properties. Here, we explore three plants that pack just that.



# Aloe Vera



It may be known for its soothing healing properties – commonly used on burns and other skin ailments – but aloe vera can support our mental health, too. Grown inside, this plant is thought to be one of the strongest air purifiers around, making it a handy addition to bedrooms and workspaces, as it's thought to help tackle stress and headaches. Aloe vera is also resilient and perfect for those who are just starting out with plants, or if you don't have a lot of time to tend to them.



# Lavender



Lavender has been used throughout history to aid relaxation and sleep. How exactly does it work? According to a study published in the Natural Medicine Journal, lavender calms anxiety by soothing the limbic system, the part of our brain that controls emotions. Pick a few sprigs, dry them out, and make them into scented bags to leave under your pillow or to take with you to relieve anxiety on-the-go.





# Peppermint



Another herb that makes a delicious, soothing, tea, peppermint is thought to tackle stress, and helps to clear your mind. It's also said to aid with digestion and sleep, making it an all-round wonder. But beyond the teapot, drop some fresh leaves into a hot bath for an invigorating, uplifting experience. Be warned, mint plants can be invasive, so it's worth planting this one in a pot.





# Other plants to consider

🌿 Rosemary

🌿 Camomile

🌿 Leafy salad greens





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