

Growth Mindset in Action

Video: Mental Well-being Drives Success

(SHELLY-ANN BROWN:) I think mental health is a big deal. I didn't know, even through all of my years of doing track, how big of a role that it plays to being mentally healthy as well as physically healthy. So often we ignore that side of things. When I started doing bobsledding, it was a totally different game. And we had, at one point, on the team it was offered to us a sports psychologist. And I remember when they offered it to us, I was, like -- I don't know, a sport psychologist? But as the years went on, I ended up having good conversations, and I remember one, I'll just give you one example of a really -- a time that it was really needed for me. It was at the Olympic Games. And I had had -- many people don't know -- four hip injections that year, the year of the Olympic Games. And I had some severe pain in my hip. And so I would get these injections, and it would tide me over for a few months, and then it would start to wear off, and then I'd have to go get another one. And sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. So that year I had four.

And we were at the Olympic Games, I'm in the Olympic Village, and our sports psychologist is there. And he's, like, "If you need to talk about anything," "I think I'm good," you know, "Thank you." And I'm training. But the effect of the shot that I had had a month or two ago is now beginning to wear off, and I'm freaking out a little bit, thinking, I'm going to be in pain, and it's going to affect how I run. And then I'm not going to be able to compete well. And at the Olympic Games, this is the one time when I want to compete my best. And I met with him, I want to say, two or three days before competition, and I was explaining to him how I felt, and how I was losing it a little bit, because I was, like, "Oh, no!" And he said two words that just turned everything on its head. He said, "So what?" And I was, like, "What do you mean, "so what?" And he was, like, "So what?" He's, like, "So what if you have -- if it's wearing off. So what if it's affecting maybe the way that you run?" He's, like, "Who you are and how you have run got you to where you are now. What if it's good enough? Like, what if it's good enough?" And I was, like, "Oh, yeah!" You know? I mean, at that level, you're so tuned in to focus on every small, minute detail. And his two simple words of, "So what?" It just was, like, "Oh, yeah!" You know?

And so I remember warming up for our last run down, our fourth run. And for bobsledding, you never want it to be snowing, because that can affect your time down the track. And so I was warming up at the top of Whistler, and I remember looking up and I had, like, my iPod in, and I was listening to music. And I looked up and there was flurries coming down. And I remember thinking, "So what?" Like, everyone's going to have it, and whatever is going to be is going to be. There's nothing left to do today but just compete.

So it's important to have that mental stability, and to be able to have those people in your life, and that resource in your life to look at things correctly, or look at things from a different angle.