

THERE ARE ONLY  
TWO TIMES  
I FEEL STRESS:



DAY AND NIGHT.

# Who's there for the coach?

**Stress, Burnout, &  
Wellbeing in Sports  
Coaching**



The Swedish Sport  
Psychology Association  
12th Annual Conference,  
Stockholm, 2014.

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Sheffield Hallam University, UK**

# Background



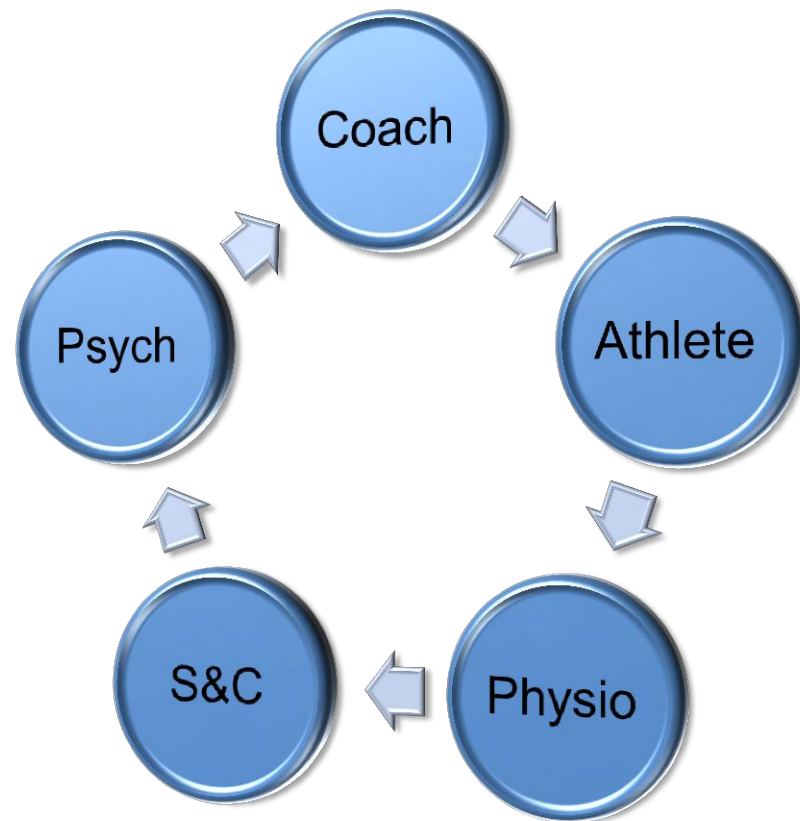
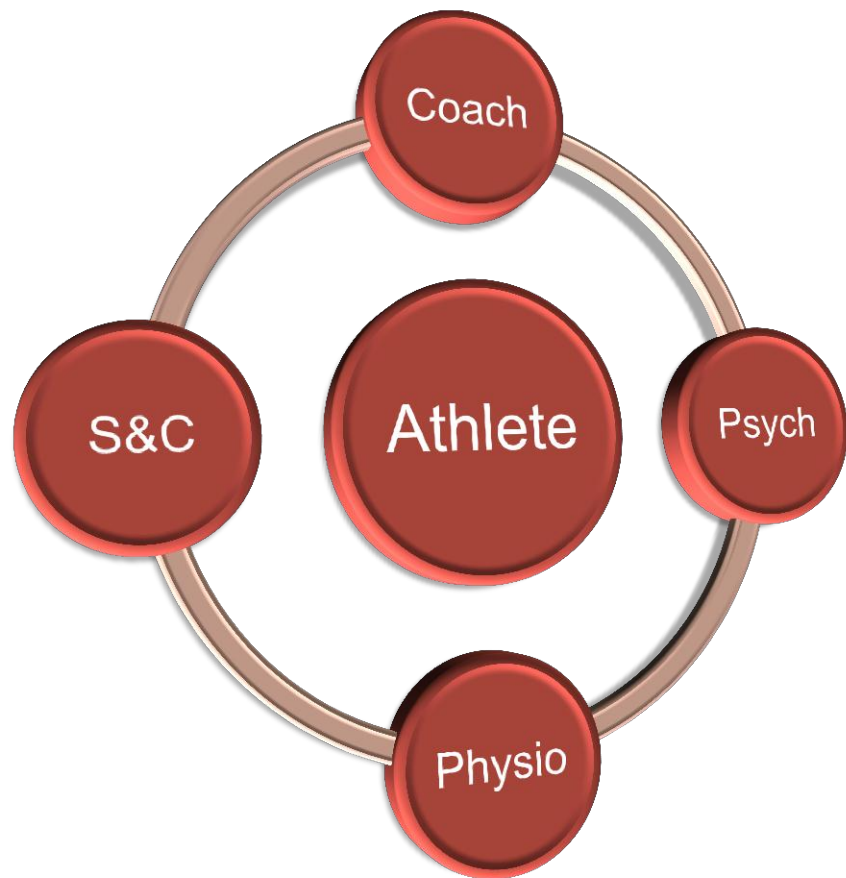


# Background

- MSc Sport Science
  - psychology
- PhD research
  - stress and coping in elite sports coaching



# High Performance Teams



# The Coaching Performance

**Coaches are  
performers too!**

(Frey, 2007; Gould et al.,  
2002)

“Coaching can be a  
very consuming,  
demanding, and  
frustrating  
experience”

(Raedeke, 2004, p.333)



# Stress research at Sheffield Hallam University

Olusoga et al. (2009)

- Identified stressors



Similar findings in other research  
(e.g., Frey, 2007; Thelwell et al., 2008)



# Responses/Effects of Stress

## Responses to Stress Olusoga et al. (2010)

Negative cognitions  
Emotional responses  
Reduced confidence  
  
Negative affect (mood  
disturbance)  
Decreased motivation  
Negative effects on  
relationships  
Withdrawal

## Consequences of Burnout Cresswell & Eklund (2006)

Reduced motivation  
Physical withdrawal  
Impaired health  
Family problems  
Decreased  
performance  
Negative mood  
changes  
Poor recovery from  
illness and training

# Burnout Defined

- enduring experiential syndrome of exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment

Maslach & Jackson (1986)

- Emotional/Physical Exhaustion
- Reduced Personal Accomplishment
- Depersonalisation



# Withdrawal

- One of the most important elements in the development of young coaches is their learning from more experienced coaches  
(Cushion et al., 2003)
- Withdrawal from coaching as a result of burnout has severe implications for the development of expertise  
(Kosa, 1990)

# Coping

**Olusoga et al. (2010)**

- Structuring & Planning
- Limited use of Psychological Skills
- Experience & Learning

## **Avoidance/Distraction**

- Dismiss it and pretend it's not there
- Avoiding confrontations
- Cocoon myself into a bubble

# Coaches Coping Strategies

**Coping at Olympics**

**Coach Specific  
Strategies**

**Team Support**

**Taking Time Out**

**Drinking**

**Psychological Skills**

**Olusoga et al. (2011)**



# Current Burnout Research

Kenttä and Olusoga (in prep)

- Either way
  - we know that coaching is stressful and we know that coaches are burning out
- Narrative analysis
  - telling the stories of burned out coaches
- Two elite Swedish coaches interviewed



# Narrative Analysis - Situational factors

## Coach 1

High expectations

Self-expectations

Conflicting job/family demands

Uncertainty

Fear of asking for help -  
Can't show weakness

Lack of Help - Isolation

Got too serious

External pressure to continue

## Coach 2

High expectations

Self-expectations

Conflicting job/family demands

Uncertainty

Fear of asking for help -  
Can't show weakness

Media Scrutiny



# Narrative analysis - The burnout experience

- Downward Spiral
  - family and work life affected and influenced each other
- "Nothing to contribute"
- "Inadequate"
- "Lost"



# A growing concern?

- Taylor (1992)
  - SMT for coaches
- Giges et al. (2004)
  - Individualised sport psych support
- Sharp & Hodge (2013)
  - Consultant/Coach relationships



**Where are the  
intervention studies?**

**How can we support  
coaches more  
effectively?**

# Olusoga et al. (in review)



## Mental Skills (MSQ)

↑ imagery, mental preparation, self-confidence\*, and relaxation\*

## Competitive Anxiety (CSAI-2md)

↓ Intensity of cognitive and somatic\* anxiety

↑ self-confidence intensity scores increased.

→ somatic anxiety and self-confidence as more facilitative towards performance

← cognitive anxiety perceived as slightly less facilitative.

\*indicates statistical significance at  $p < 0.05$

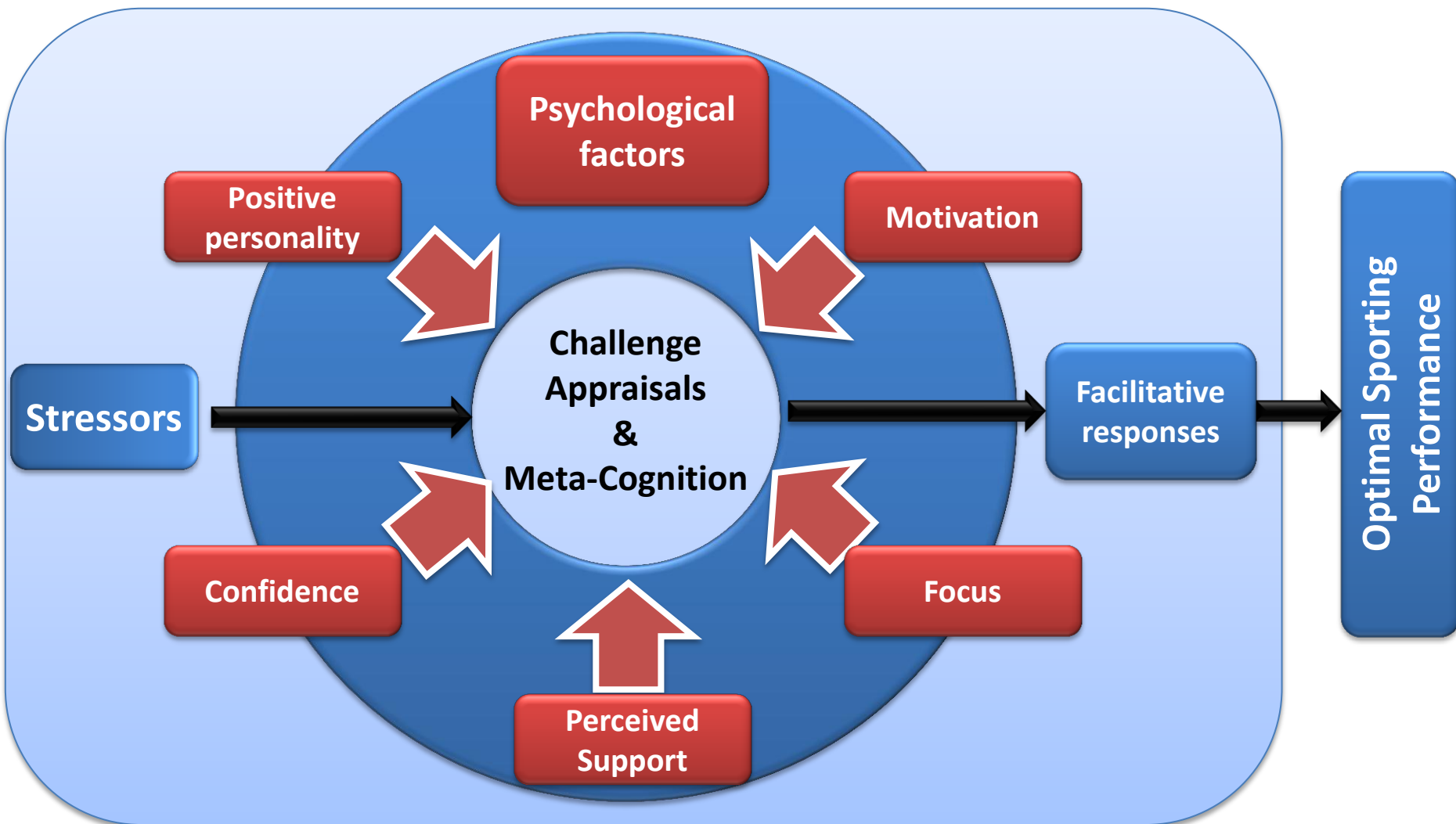
## Coping Strategies

- ↑ Venting, Humour, Active Coping all used to a greater extent after the intervention
- ↓ Self-Blame used less frequently\*

## Coping Effectiveness

- No significant differences found
- ↑ 9 of 12 coping strategies perceived as more effective

# Building Resilient Coaches



Model adapted from Fletcher & Sarkar (2012)

# Organisational Culture



- Removing the stigma?
  - sport psychology part of coach education
  - including basic MST/PST



- Managing withdrawal and recovery?
  - support available for coaches
  - managing the withdrawal process

# How do we get coaches to "buy in"?





# Coach Education & Psychology



UKCC Level 3  
Coaching  
Qualification

MSc / PGdip  
Sport Coaching

**BRITISH**  
**JUDO**

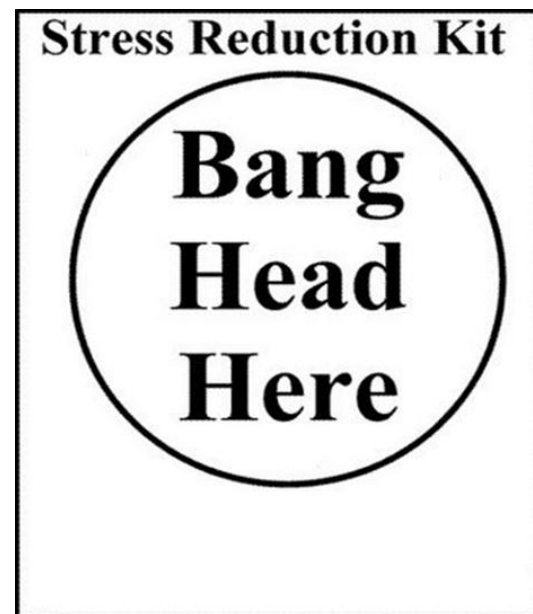
# The way forward

- **RESEARCH**

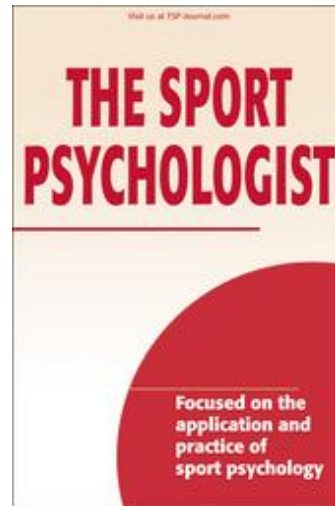
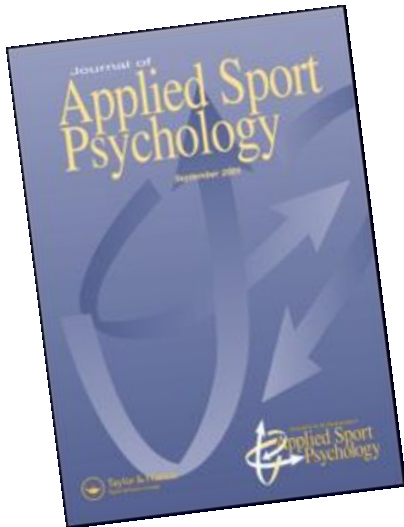
- Burnout experience
- warning signs
- symptoms
- recovery
- longitudinal studies

- **APPLIED PRACTICE**

- "Checking in" with coaches
- Building support networks
- Involvement in coach education



# Final thought



# Tack så mycket

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