

psychology(ing?)

by Shantelle Szuch - Registered Psychologist

Two Articles by Shantelle Szuch, psychologist and 5 pin bowler.

Letting Go of Expectations of Results

Something I learned from a bowling coach (yes, until about 2 years ago I competitively 5 pin bowled), was the idea of letting go of expectation of results. Let me explain... I'm on the approach, I have control over what I do, sometimes I even threw a really great ball, hit the pocket flawlessly, and sometimes that corner pin would still stand. Now, this might even happen a few frames in a row, and then I'd start to get frustrated, so I'd likely get a little tense. In bowling that can mean not finishing the shot and even more corner pins standing, or worse, lots of head pins. Then, one day I had one of my mentors tell me to let go of any expectation from the pins. I can do what I can do and only that. Sometimes the pins are not going to fall the way I think they "should". But, I can't control them. I can only control me. So, let go...



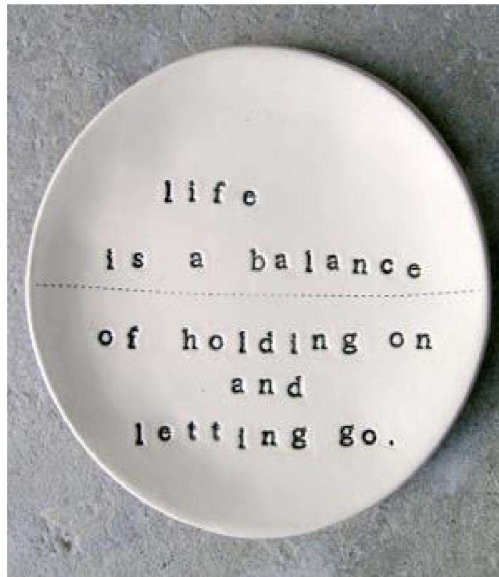
That doesn't mean let go of a desire to do well. Or let go of doing your best with the things you can control. It means simply, let go of this idea that something "should" happen just because you did what you could. We can apply this to many things. Weight loss - you can control your calories in and calories out, you can eat "healthy" choices, you can clock a perfect mathematical weight loss plan... and you still might not lose the kind of weight you "should".



How about as it relates to lifting? Put the time in the gym, do all the work, have your nutrition in line, the peak phase is perfectly executed. Meet day still might not go according to plan. Your opener might need to be dropped. You might have a problem with touching in your shirt. Maybe that deadlift that "should" have been easy didn't budge.



Apply this to basically anything you can think of!! I've picked just a few, but it works with almost any scenario. Relationships? Do what you can, invest the way you believe, do everything in your power... but ultimately you cannot control the other person and s/he may not act the way you believe s/he "should". In trauma work, I can implement the model I use exactly how it's written. I can make it safe and fun and create an environment where healing "should" happen... and it still might not. I have a quote on my computer. It's been in my life since 2003 and on my various computers since 2008 - "Today I will do what I can... And I will give the rest up to the Universe". I can only control what I can... I only have so much power and so much influence. Ultimately, I cannot always control outcomes.



I love this quote because it simplifies this idea. I need to know what I can control and what I should let go of to be healthy and happy. Trying to hang on to what those pins do 60ft away is only going to be frustrating...

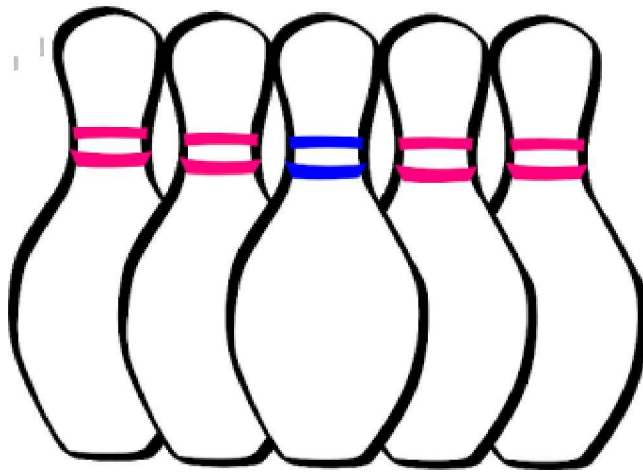


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Things 5 pin bowling taught me about powerlifting...

This one is kind of funny, and something I've talked about a bit with people but never organized into one place. First, it's quite enjoyable to me when someone in my "lifting world" finds out that until a couple years ago I 5 pin bowled quite seriously. In fact, I was a bowler long before I ever touched a barbell... I was a bowler before I knew what a barbell was.



- 1) Bowling taught me it's neither the small details nor the big picture. They both matter! In bowling, you have 10 frames a game. Often, you have many games. No single ball or frame will make or break the day, but if you don't take into account that every ball matters, you can end up taking each opportunity for granted. Each day in the gym matters, gotta go put the work in, but no one day will make or break a training cycle. It's about how you put all those days together just like how you put all those balls and frames together into the big picture that matters. You can't focus on one without acknowledging the other though.



- 2) Bowling also taught me how to save adrenaline for when it matters. I know this sounds absolutely ridiculous, but trust me when I say there can be a lot of adrenaline just like in any sport. Adrenaline wears you out. You need to learn how to save the adrenaline for when it matters so you don't get totally worn out. If you need a bunch of adrenaline every time to show up to throw your 4 games in league, you'll never survive a 20 game day without crashing, so you learn to practice without adrenaline. Same goes for lifting. Save the adrenaline for a meet, or at the very least, PRs in the gym. You should not be hitting PRs every day you train unless you are brand spanking new. If you need adrenaline surges and

to be hyped up just to hit your every day squats, what happens in a meet? How much more hyped do you need? You should be able to hit that opener without a big burst of adrenaline... or you might want to reconsider your opener.



3) Bowling taught me to save my energy and effort for game time and turn it off in between so I didn't get burned out. Imagine long days, several games a day, 10 frames a game and however many balls you might throw (hopefully it's fewer rather than more). If you didn't learn how to turn it off in between, you'd crash and burn in a couple games. This relates to the adrenaline stuff. You can't stay "up" all the time. It's too exhausting! So, you need to learn how to come off the approach, finish that frame in your head, get some mental space until it's time to step up again. Develop a habit or pattern of behaviour that helps you to do this. For me, I'd slap hands, give my next teammate some encouraging words, and then I step to the very back of the group - the physical space allowed my brain to get mental space. When the player before me was up, I would make my way to the approach from the back of the group. This was closing that space, physically and psychologically. I would then start giving myself mental cues and listening to my coach's voice. Often I would nod in agreement. Often I would smile or laugh as well (the tension relief is powerful). In powerlifting this is the same. I'm sure that sometimes my laughing and joking in the staging area can feel like I'm not taking things seriously, but instead, I'm actually distancing myself mentally so as to not exhaust myself too early. Most of the time, after an attempt, I'll come off, agree on a next attempt or tell my coach to make the call and then crack a joke or talk about something else. I'm giving myself psychological distance. I can tell you, when I haven't done this, I've had a harder time, just like in bowling. If you can't give yourself the psychological break in between frames or attempts, you will crash early.



4) Now this one is important. My old bowling coach would understand if I said "ABIC" - that stands for Any Bowler in Canada. What that means is that on any day anything could happen and I could beat any bowler in Canada... but that also means that any bowler in Canada could beat me. This is a message in humility but also respecting other athletes and the sport. I could go in to any event, being considered the "favourite" to win, and still have my ass handed to me. I could go into any event, being a total underdog and win as well. I can think of instances where both of these happened and I've tried to bring this to powerlifting. It was a bit different for a long time because in powerlifting, in many instances, I'm not exactly considered a favourite to win, but of course, like anything, it depends who is there. But, the message stays the same - if I go into a meet and assume that I am going to win because "I'm stronger, better, etc" I might find out very quickly that the universe has plans in humility for me. It does not frankly matter what my bests are vs my competitors... I still have to respect the

fact that I need to go out there and do the work and not take it for granted. I am a firm believer when you stop believing and respecting that there is always someone better than you, you will get your butt kicked!

ALWAYS COMPETE

- 5) Bowling taught me the value of competition and hard work. Dedication to a game or sport is a wonderful thing. The time you spend putting in the work that doesn't always pay off as planned, but fuels your fire anyway. I can think of a tournament where I went in after months of corner pin drills and I won, likely because I spared more corners than the girl who came in second. It ended up being a tournament of corner pin spares and my hard work paid off. I can also think of times where I practiced months on end, and showed up that day and couldn't hit the broad side of a barn! It was like I was throwing bricks. Powerlifting is the same - training can go very well and you face the reality on game day that you might have a flawless meet... or you might be throwing bricks LOL But either way, regardless of how it's going, be a competitor in spirit. Do your best in that moment and compete with integrity. If I go back to bowling, I have said I will have the phrase "play with integrity" stitched on my towel because it is that important. You may win, you may lose, but always compete!