

Why Being Anxious Might Get You Injured

Myself and Ben were chatting the other day in clinic about anxiety generally and the affects it has on both the athletes and clients we see both in professional sport and here at the clinic.

It got me thinking and as such I did some researching.

I found a study which happens to be quite appropriate given the recent World Athletic Championships we've just seen over here in London.

As a side note I tried getting some tickets for a few of the track sessions, including events involving Usain Bolt & Mo Farah, but wasn't able to get hold of any!!!!

In short, the study looked to determine predictors of injury and illness before the previous World Athletic Championships (Beijing, 2015).

A total of 307 athletes completed a health screen, whilst all new injuries and illnesses that occurred at the championships were recorded.

Of the 307, 116 athletes (38.3%) reported an injury symptom during the month before the championships, while 40 athletes (13%) reported an illness symptom.

Various different findings were evident including endurance athletes being 10-fold more likely to sustain an in-championship illness than speed/power athletes.

That said the biggest standout for me regarding this research paper was the link between increased injury risk and anxiety.

Those athletes reporting an illness symptom causing anxiety were five-fold more likely to sustain an in-championship injury.

For me this is obvious.

Injury of any type is the result of our bodies being unable to tolerate stress. When we reach failure point any tissue, be it bone, ligament, muscle, fascia etc, will break. This could manifest itself in a muscle tear, tendonopathy, bone fracture, ligament tear etc etc.

What we often don't consider is other stressors, non-physical stressors that contribute towards our overall 'stress' level.

Ultimately the more we are 'stressed' via physical and non-physical stressors, the more likely we are to break down.

Obviously, recovery strategies or for a better term 'de-stressing activities' play a big part in this process. In short, if we progressively load, we adapt, assuming adequate recovery is observed.

But, how often have you really observed and acknowledged the non-physical stressors that may have contributed towards one of your past or current injuries?

Probably not many of you.....

In most environments, this happens very infrequently if ever!!!

Some of these non-physical stressors could be financial, work related or even issues with family or friends.

Can you remember the last time your lower back, knee, shoulder hurt?

Did it come on for no reason?

Have a think what else was going on at that time.

Were some of these other stressors active (heavy work schedule, relationship or financial worries etc)?

If so its likely that these were strong contributors to why your injury started or resurfaced.

Rather than a reactive system, wouldn't we be better at trying to screen and observe these stressors frequently, to pick up any possible issues that might predispose injury, to try prevent injury before it happens?

A more proactive approach seems reasonable rather than reacting to injuries after they have occurred.

By failing to look out for stressors, not just the physical stressors, we are missing a big trick!!!

Hope you enjoyed reading this post,

Andy

Article Reference: Timpka et al (2017) Preparticipation predictors for championship injury and illness: cohort study at the Beijing 2015 International Association of Athletics Federations World Championships. British Journal of Sports Medicine, 51 (4), 271-276.