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[00:00:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Welcome back to the Flex Diet Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mike T. Nelson. On

[00:00:05] the podcast, we talk about all things to increase strength, add more muscle, increase performance, and improve body composition, all without destroying your health a flexible manner. Today on the podcast we have Dr. Mona Pretorius, and we're talking about sports psychology, like what is some of the

[00:00:28] mental side that you can do to increase your performance in the gym. We talk about everything from high level elite athletes to being able to apply some of these techniques just in a commercial gym. What are some of the stressors of athletics that are outside of just the field itself or training?

[00:00:52] What are some of the benefits to being able to change your state, how you can get ready for a lift and then also get back to a state of relaxation and then get ready to lift again, and many other tips that you can apply right away. So Dr. Mona is a PhD. She is also a highly ranked former South American weightlifter.

[00:01:16] She competed in the Women's 63 Kilogram event at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and she won a bronze medal there. She can currently be found on Lift Big, eat big, and she has her own practice that she works with athletes also. We'll make sure to put all the links in the show notes here and if you are also looking for other things to increase your performance.

[00:01:43] Check out the Physiologic flexibility certification. It opens again, coming up this September 18th, 2023. It'll be open for one week until September 25th, 2023. It's divided into four areas to increase your body's ability to recover, to be more anti-fragile, and just generally a lot harder to kill. The first pillar is temperature.

[00:02:08] So what do you do for sauna? Exercising in the heat all the way down to cold water immersion, which I just did today. Once again pillar number two is pH. Everything from breathing techniques to true high intensity interval training. Other types of cardiovascular and training in general, three would be fuels.

[00:02:31] This is an expansion of the level one, which is the flex diet certification based on metabolic flexibility. So here we're expanding that out to the fuels of lactate and ketones. Everything from doing a longer fast to high intensity interval training and things that produce lactate itself, or what you commonly may have heard of is acetic acid.

[00:02:56] And number four is air c o two and O two. And all of these are arranged in a way that you'll understand the theory that goes into each one. You'll understand the overall concept of physiologic flexibility, and you'll have five specific action items for each individual. One. So either yourself or if you're working with clients, you'll know exactly how to apply it to them.

[00:03:22] And then next part is most people don't have a ton of experience in each one of those areas, and you don't need to do this for hours on end. The intervention you can do is usually. Low on the timescale of the time that you or your athletes would need to invest in it. So check out all the information there@physiologicflexibility.com.

[00:03:44] We'll put a link down in the notes. You can get onto the wait list. We will have some cool bonus items once again. So that opens September 18th, 2023 for one week. So enjoy this podcast here. With Dr. Mona Pretorius,

[00:04:05] Hello there and welcome to the podcast. How are you today?

[00:04:09] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Hi, Dr. Mike. I'm doing really well. Thank you.

[00:04:11] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** How are you? Good. We got to meet up with you and your husband last, was it a year ago, I think now when we were in Texas? Does that sound right?

[00:04:21] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Yes, I think it was a bit less because I was pregnant at the time.

[00:04:26] Yeah, a little four month old baby. Aw. But having a baby time also goes so quickly when I saw you and Jody and it was really nice meeting

[00:04:36] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** you guys. Yeah, it was very fun. And you were talking about some great work you do in the realm of sports psychology and I guess as a primer, why do you think people should care about sports psychology?

[00:04:50] I think there's this, there's more of an emphasis on it now than there has been. But I think if you pull most people when you ask about performance, they just think of the physical performance. They don't necessarily think of quote unquote mental type performance.

[00:05:06] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Yes, I think it's one of those topics that, like you said, it's become very popular over the years, or at least more popular than it used to be.

[00:05:13] And I think people are starting to realize how important it is to actually deal with the mental side of things. And I think the nice thing about it is because a lot of top level athletes have also been talking about mental health. It's. Shown the importance that, athletes are humans too.

[00:05:31] Athletes are dealing with mental pressures. We are not just machines. We can't just go all the time even though it seems that way, but you are dealing with a lot of stuff when it comes to the mental side of things as well. And by dealing with those mental aspects will only make you a better competitor at the end of the day.

[00:05:50] So I really do think it's one of those things that are important to athletes. And it's, just when it comes to dealing with certain pressures dealing with anxiety even for some athletes when they achieve really great results nowadays, with social media, they have to speak in public.

[00:06:09] So those are again, other stresses that athletes end up facing. And at the end of the day, if you can. Work with those with those aspects and incorporate those mental tools into your training. Just like your physical training, you have to continually train it, so it'll only become better the more you train it.

[00:06:29] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. And at the professional level, it's always fascinating to me how, and I get that you're maybe interviewing the coach, after a big game or that type of thing, but they'll pick some players and interview them, and they ask just in my opinion, the stupidest questions. They're like, are you disappointed?

[00:06:47] You lost? Of course he's disappointed, or he or she is lost. What kind of question is that? Or they'll ask about, do you feel like you gave it your all or are these like just. Weird questions that I feel are just not helpful. And sometimes they'll put an athlete up there who, may not have a lot of experience

with that, and they're just asking them these crazy questions, which to me seems I would imagine that would be incredibly stressful.

[00:07:12] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** No, definitely. Because, as an athlete I feel like, even with my past being an elite level athlete, you put a lot more pressure on yourself than people actually realize. And by having someone ask that question to you like you said, at the end of the day, you beat yourself down. Yeah.

[00:07:29] According to plan. And you put in not just. Days and hours you put in years and years of work into becoming a top level athlete. And sport isn't always just linear progression. It's, you hit plateaus, you will compete in big competitions, and you might be, the superstar of that game and then come the next game and you mess up.

[00:07:52] And that, that's just part of sport. And that's also what makes athletes really good, is how they bounce back from those kind of things. So as soon as people, think, are you really disappointed? I feel like you go home with it and you keep it a lot longer than the outside person, because the outside person might see it as, oh, they performed really badly and then just forget about it.

[00:08:16] Where you as the athlete will linger with it. But again, what makes a good athlete is you might. Be dealing with this bad performance or performance that maybe didn't go as planned, but then going back to the drawing board and being like, okay, this happened. I'll have my little grieving process deal with it, get it out of my system, but then I have to move on and focus on my next, starting my training for the next competition, for example.

[00:08:44] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, it's a good point. You mentioned about actually the scale of trying to forget something. I remember talking, it was a couple years ago, a buddy of mine here who coaches a lot of top American football players. And I was asking him about what kind of person do you get to be like the defensive person on like a wide receiver?

[00:09:02] Because you almost, by definition, you know that you are gonna give up some huge plays. Like it's just probably an inevitability thing, but you're, you're trying to prevent that. And he is yeah, he is they all have really short memories. I was like what do you mean? He is because if you do give up a big play, then you're the star person.

[00:09:24] You have to come back and probably play the rest of the game. They're probably not gonna yank you and put in somebody else, but if you keep

focusing on the thing that you screwed up, like you'll paradoxically make it worse. So you have to like you were saying, acknowledge it and realize and learn from it, but then also literally forget about it.

[00:09:41] Take the lesson and not try to drone on it, because I know if that were me, I would've a very hard time of just forgetting about that. Does that make sense?

[00:09:54] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** No, a hundred percent. And again, coming from Olympic weightlifting where when you compete at a competition, you have three snatches, three cleaner jerks.

[00:10:04] And sometimes what happen is, You will miss your first lift. Yeah, top level athletes who walk onto that platform, you can be the strongest you've been. Everything can go according to plan, but you walk onto that platform and there's just a little technical fault. You might be a little bit too nervous.

[00:10:21] There's a lot of things that are happening. You might be going for, a podium spot. So you have to start heavier than normal. And then when you've missed, say, your first lift, which has happened to me as well, you do sometimes go into a bit of a panic and you do think, oh my gosh, now I have to get my second attempt.

[00:10:38] And then sometimes you walk onto the platform and you miss your second attempt as well. Now you've got one more lift to make a total. And this could be maybe an international competition, or it could be, you preparing for, the Olympics and you have to make a qualification total. So it's really massive.

[00:10:54] And then obviously when this happens, you have to immediately be like, okay, I missed my second attempt. I can't dwell on this. 'cause going onto that, I have to reset my mind, walk onto that platform, make as if it's my first lift again. And you have to forget about, you missing that lift because walking onto that platform, you can't have negative thoughts.

[00:11:16] You can't be thinking, what if I miss this? Because I feel especially in weightlifting, it's such a mental game that as soon as you doubt your ability, there's a massive chance that you will end up missing that weight at the end of the day.

[00:11:32] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** What are some techniques that you've used? And the reason we're talking about high level athletes, 'cause some people might

be listening and going, oh God, he is just going off about professional athletes again.

[00:11:42] And, but I think the extremes also inform the means. If you find skills and tips and techniques that work at a high level, you may need to scale 'em down or change them a little bit. But I can almost guarantee that the principle and the idea behind it, Also, work for people at a lower level where the reverse doesn't necessarily appear to be true.

[00:12:01] Like you can have some stuff that'll work, but as you get up more to, an events level, an elite level like yourself, those things don't always work, but the reverse does. So what would be some, techniques or tips or things that you found that are helpful to reset that process?

[00:12:19] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Yeah, no, you're absolutely right.

[00:12:21] When it comes to you know what use in elite level, you can scale it down for, a person who might be doing their sport recreationally. Or it could be, them doing a presentation or a

[00:12:32] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Sure, yeah.

[00:12:32] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** A different environment. Yeah. And, you might be, start off your talk or your presentation, you might mess up your few, your first few slides or sentences or whatever you're doing.

[00:12:42] And you have to, like you said, you have to then reset your mind. And I've been working with athletes for the longest time with this, and sometimes obviously you have to change it up for, depending on the athlete, you have to individualize it for them. But one of the techniques that I like implementing with athletes, especially when they just have a lot going on, or, they might have this thing that's affected them, is I've got this little letting go technique that I do with them.

[00:13:07] And what I say to them is have a little, like a little mantra. Have something that you say and, but use it every single time. And again, practice this in training so that if this happens come competition day, then you have this little letting go technique or this mantra.

[00:13:27] And yeah, it could be anything from. Let's focus breathe or let go something short, something, super simple. And then I always have them do a little physical gesture then as well. So it's a little routine of say, letting go.

Maybe they have a little elastic around their hand or maybe they have they rub their shirt or something.

[00:13:49] And that's so saying basically breathe, let go rub their shirt. And then just immediately visualizing yourself doing the successful thing that you wanna do is just a little letting go technique. And then what I also like doing is if a person comes in, say to a training session and they just have so much going on I will often say to them, there's another letting go technique that I really like is write down whatever you have.

[00:14:18] Put it in a, put it in your gym bag, put it in a pencil case, whatever, and just make sure then that hour that you are training or doing what you need to do, you leave that problem by the door because it's still gonna be there when you come back. But having that time for you to focus and just letting go for that 30 minutes or that hour is also really good for the mind.

[00:14:41] And then, yes, the problem will still be there, but then revisiting it when you come back.

[00:14:48] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** No I love that. I think that's really key. And you mentioned about having the half hour time training to just focus on that, which I don't know. I only go to a, I'm lucky I only go to a commercial gym like once a week, like just to do upper body stuff and play with machines and use dumbbells.

[00:15:04] But it's great 'cause I walk in there and I'm like, ah, never have to squat, never have to deadlift here, never have to do anything too crazy. But I just. It seems like it's getting worse that I don't know how many people in there look like they're not even paying attention. It just looks like they're going through the motions.

[00:15:19] They're scrolling through God knows what on their phone about halfway to fall asleep between reps on the PEC deck machine. And any tips on how people should better concentrate during a session? And I assume you would answer and agree that I think it's a lost skill that people don't realize how much performance and adaptation, even if their goal is body comp that they're giving up.

[00:15:46] But yes, they're going there, they're going through the motions, which is great. Which is much better than what most people do. But any thoughts on how much. Performance or even just progress they're giving up by,

it feels like having their attention span split all the time. And these are not people who are on, on call in the er.

[00:16:02] These are people who could probably more attention. No

[00:16:08] **Dr Mona Pretorious:** I agree. The phones can be an evil nowadays because like you said, a person will maybe do an exercise and then you get lost with, even going through social media. Yeah. And after they'll scroll and before they know it, they've maybe looked at, Instagram or TikTok or whatever for five to 10 minutes, and then they go on and do their second set where you've then basically lost that whole, Exercise or lost the whole emphasis of going there, getting a good workout in, getting a good pump if you're just going there to train.

[00:16:43] Sure. Or working towards a, it might be a fat loss goal or gaining more muscle, whatever it might be. But I really do think that, if you have a problem like that and you do get lost in those kind of things then saying to yourself, okay, I'm gonna turn my phone on to airplane mode or something if, that is the biggest thing that's distracting you, you have to make mental and physical effort to try and not get distracted by it.

[00:17:08] And I think that's where people, get it wrong because they think, like you said, I'm showing up at the gym and that's good enough. And then they might be into their program like six weeks or eight weeks and they're like, I haven't really seen results. I was told, if I walk into the gym and I do my training session, and like you said, walking in there is better than not walking in there at all.

[00:17:29] But it's so much wasted time that could have been used. Towards actually achieving your goal. So again, if you sit with this problem, turn your phone onto airplane mode, if you feel like there's certain music that motivates you I'm a big fan of just either, putting my headphones on, on, getting really focused, and I'm like, okay, this is my playlist for the hour.

[00:17:53] This is what I'm gonna listen to, to psych me up, getting me through my training session. Making sure that, these are my goals. I'm also a very goal orientated person. So before my training session, I will always look at what is my training that I'm doing, so that I know going into the gym and then being like, okay, this is my goal for today's session.

[00:18:13] So yeah, just walking in there and actually just having an a plan is also a nice way to not get as distracted because I think as well if a person just

walks into the gym and. You don't have any plan or you don't have a goal and you're just gonna see what machines are open that day. That's also a way for people to then use it as an excuse of, oh, but I maybe wanted to use this machine and it was busy, so I'm gonna, sit on the bike a little longer and scroll through my phone and then realize, oh, I have a meeting in, I have to go and yeah, finish off my session and you didn't really do anything.

[00:18:51] So a lot of wasted time. But it's in your control. At the end of the day, you can control these kind of things. And I think that's where people forget that yeah, if you wanna achieve something, you have

[00:19:04] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** to make the effort. Yeah. And you mentioned a good part about control is that I'm a neurotic person about the things I can control, but also being aware of the things I can't control.

[00:19:15] So for me, like notebook is over there, but I actually write all my training down in a notebook and I have clients. I still recommend this, even though, yeah, I send their program out online and stuff. It's just easier to manage. And even like the bigger goals I'll have, I'll put, what is the goal for that session or that lift knowing that it's a goal, I may or may not hit it, but trying to just reemphasize again that this is the direction, I want to go.

[00:19:41] For some of my bigger lifts, I'll actually draw a little caricature of the bar with the plates loaded on it. Because sometimes I do a standard 45 pound bar, sometimes using an axle, it's 75 pounds. So visually they look a little bit different. I'll write that out. Normally I'll try to, if I do have my phone, I'll try to put on airplane mode, download whatever I'm listening to there I have my big headphones that I can adjust the volume on the headphones.

[00:20:06] I don't have to fault with my phone. And then I also have this weird rule where, If someone asks me a question about my t-shirt or something I'm wearing in the gym I will not wear that again because I don't wanna talk to anybody. And I find that, usually the darker, more scary black metal shirt I can find works good to just people stay away then.

[00:20:28] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** No I love that actually because I'm a very social person and when I get talking I can talk a lot and when I'm in my training session I take it really seriously and that might be the athlete in me that I've been my whole life. But then again, when I used to coach, the same thing would happen.

[00:20:48] I would have people come up to me wanting to ask me a question or just wanting to know how things are going or when's my next competition. So I really found that wearing those big earphones was a nice way of saying okay. We can talk after, this is my me time, I can't hear anything right now.

[00:21:07] I'm focused on my session and I would then, I wouldn't even make eye contact because I find that as soon as I make eye contact in way, that's a good way for someone to be like, Hey, let's quickly go and say, hi Timon. You also have to get certain things done. Yeah I love the fact that you said if someone comes to you and asks you a question about your t-shirt, then you don't wear it again.

[00:21:29] That's it. That's it. I haven't heard that one before, but I like it.

[00:21:33] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, because back to controlling, those are all things I can control, right? At the end of the day, you can try to set all the process up as best you can. You can't directly control the outcome. And everyone knows especially the longer you exercise, the more you know variability you'll have some days that are great.

[00:21:51] Other days they're like, eh, and, but you can control the setup to it. You can control your nutrition before. And I just feel like a lot of people are giving up. They wanna achieve a bigger goal, but they are more worried about all these things that they can't control. And then you watch them train and it's I don't even know if any of these people at a gym have a program.

[00:22:12] Like I've seen two people ever write anything down. I'm like, I don't really think you can remember set four of the bench press last week you did five or six reps. And if you're new it probably doesn't matter that much. But the longer you've been training, like I just got a PR the other day on a grip lift by a single pound.

[00:22:30] It's a small lift, it's a small implement. But I was like, oh, that's great. I wouldn't have remembered 63 versus 62 pounds unless I actually had it written down. And again, what are you gonna do during your rest periods? Like you, it doesn't take much time anyway. I'm like a grumpy old man talking about training that nobody does now.

[00:22:45] No,

[00:22:46] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** I, when you talk about the things that you can control, again, this is one thing that I feel like a lot of people, like you were

saying, that they focus on the uncontrollables, they will also make up a lot of excuses and say, oh, I'm gonna see tomorrow if I'm not too busy. Yeah. Opening, but it's in your control to be like, okay.

[00:23:08] Pull out your calendar right now. I've got time from seven to 8:00 AM like that's what I did this morning. I knew I was gonna be really busy with podcasts and getting work in, and then also spending some time with my baby. So I knew that the only time I'm gonna be able to train this morning is from seven to 8:00 AM So I made a conscious, effort to be like, this is my scheduled time.

[00:23:30] I had a friend that came and joined us this morning in a training session. So again, that was a nice little accountability buddy. But that's in your control. Like you said, have a book take it into the gym. Myself and James, we are. Doing this religiously. We always write our program down.

[00:23:49] We always record it. I find if I don't do that, I'm not as motivated walking into the gym. I'm not as goal driven. I also don't really see my results because I'm just training to train. And again, this could be, you might be an elite level athlete or you might just be someone who is training recreationally.

[00:24:08] But having that kind of plan makes a big difference at the end of the day. And like you said, if there's, your nutrition if, say that day something happens and you are in meetings the whole day, if you prepped out your meals, You can still stay on track with your nutrition. You don't have to go without food the whole day.

[00:24:28] And then at the end of the night be like, okay, I haven't eaten everything, anything. Let's go to McDonald's or Chick-fil-A or whatever. And then not even knowing how many calories you're consuming. So I feel again, just being again, conscious of what you are putting into your body, making a bit of an effort and actually doing a little bit of the research as well about, what's gonna help you and what's gonna harm you at the end of the day will also make a difference in your results.

[00:24:56] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. And I think also realizing there's more probably in your control than you realize. Like you mentioned, the nutrition example is great. So when I worked for a MedTech company, I didn't ask if I could eat in meetings. I just brought food into the meeting. And it wasn't like reheating tuna, fish and broccoli and bringing it in or anything that was really offensive.

[00:25:16] I would. Mix some protein in a yogurt and put some fruit in it. Nobody could smell it. It wasn't like a big deal. I didn't really ask if I could do it. I just started doing it because most of the time I ended up getting booked over lunch. So I never really had a lunch period. And then it got to the point where the one day I didn't bring anything in, everyone's oh, are you feeling okay?

[00:25:38] Are you sick today? I was like, I said what the hell's going on? They're like, you're not eating in the meeting. I was like, oh. So it was like over time people just expected it as oh, that's just the thing that he does, whatever. No,

[00:25:51] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** that is true. And the same with athletes. I always say to my athletes, and this is something again that I did when I would compete internationally, you never know what's gonna be in when you go to an international competition.

[00:26:04] When it comes to the hotel. Yes, you can fight. Oh yeah. Ahead of time, but sometimes they'll tell you it's out of their control. They're not quite sure if, they'll have a sauna available. Especially I compete in a weight category sport. So you have to be exactly on your weight or just under when you compete.

[00:26:22] And if you don't, you can't compete. So what can you then do if there's not a sauna available? Maybe make sure you book a room with a hot bath and get yourself some Epsom salt. When it comes to, little snacks and stuff, you might be visiting a foreign country that. You might not be you might not actually be able to consume the foods that they have.

[00:26:43] You might have a certain reaction to it. It just might not sit well with your stomach. You might feel bloated. So taking the certain, certain snacks with you that you know, works really well with your body little protein shakes some cobs, whatever you might consume and then on the day have your, like competition snacks ready.

[00:27:03] You might not know if there's a scale available. So take a scale that you've used at home that you know is the correct, gives you the correct readings, because I know also like some of the bathroom scales doesn't give you a hundred percent the correct readings. So that does cause a lot of stress.

[00:27:18] So make sure that, your scale is calibrated or put it extra a calibrated scale and just see what is like the weight difference. And take that with you.

Yes, you might have to. A lot more things with you. But again, these are things that will make your life so much easier When you are in your hotel and they say to you, okay, there's no scale available, no tell until competition day.

[00:27:42] There's no sauna available for you to cut weight. So you're like, okay, that's fine. I have a bath and bath. Whatever your snacks, your water because those are, you are already worried about what you are going to be doing on competition day. And just eliminating extra stress on top of that makes a big difference.

[00:28:02] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. I remember having a discussion with a coach who's a buddy of mine when he had an athlete performing in the Soji Olympics many years ago and we were just talking and he is ah, they said they'll have all this stuff in there. And I'm like, I said, no offense, it's not a dinging against anyone. I wouldn't trust anything that they say.

[00:28:19] Like I would have a backup to the back. The backup, bring as much stuff as you can. Yes, you're gonna be limited by it. And at the same time, after the Olympics ended, I had a conversation with a different coach friend of mine, and she was in charge of, I won't say the team name, but she was in charge of one of the US teams and went over there and she's oh yeah, it was bananas.

[00:28:39] She's I spent 99% of my time no joke on logistics, trying to figure out how to get all the things that they needed for their team there. Like they had so many issues and it wasn't just that Olympics like that happens, I would say more often than not. Because they have this big proposal.

[00:28:57] Yeah, we'll do all this stuff. And then when it comes to actually delivering, it's oh, whoops, we forgot, ah, we didn't have this. Or like you said, oh, we'll have a scale there. There's no frigging scale. Oh, sauna. Yes, for sure. You get, there's no frigging sauna, so a lot of times what. You've been told a lot of times doing your prep, sometimes you can't even trust that.

[00:29:18] **Dr Mona Pretorious:** No, I agree. And the same with actually taking hand luggage with you in Yes. Putting your, say you've got equipment like with us weightlifting equipment, my weightlifting shoes, my weightlifting valve, my weightlifting suit. I packed that in my hand luggage. Oh yes. With me the whole time because I have traveled internationally before to Olympic qualification events and my big bag has gotten lost.

[00:29:43] And it would come maybe the day before my competition. And I've seen some athletes, their bags might even arrive after the equip after. Yeah. And

there's nothing more stressful than having your equipment go lost. So yeah, I always, say if there's anything that is super important to you and that you will use on game day, make sure it's with you the whole time and keep an eye on it.

[00:30:06] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, a hundred percent. Back to controlling stuff in the gym, what would you recommend people do between sets? Because the other argument is I don't know, I gotta rest two or three minutes between sets, so I'll just scroll through Instagram because I gotta rest for this amount of time anyway.

[00:30:23] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** What would I recommend

[00:30:25] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** for Yeah, what would you recommend they do instead? Because usually just I find telling them don't do that, it doesn't work. But if I give them something else to focus on and a reason for doing it, I find that works a lot better.

[00:30:37] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Oh, definitely. What I would recommend is, firstly, if they've got a little training book, like you mentioned, write down your weights that you've just done.

[00:30:46] So after each step, write down your weights, look at maybe potentially what are your next exercises so that you can also see if. Maybe you are in a full gym, maybe you need to make sure that the next part of your, equipment that you are going to be using is open. Maybe going to just put your gym back there.

[00:31:02] So just like planning ahead of what you are going to be doing next. But then also just using that time to just get yourself focused, walk around, focus on your breathing getting yourself psyched up if maybe you are. And even if you're not an elite athlete, you can still give your best for each rep in every set.

[00:31:21] So doing that instead even some people like listening to podcasts during these sessions as well. So if that helps you stay motivated and helps you get through your session, but actually you are still doing your session with good emphasis Then I would definitely recommend it. But if you find that you are listening to a podcast and it does, again, similar to Instagram, make your rest a lot longer because maybe the podcast that one piece that you're listening to is really interesting.

[00:31:48] I would then maybe rather say, use that podcast as something that you can use when you maybe drive or, you're busy cleaning or whatever you are doing. Yeah. And just make sure that, in that time it's something productive that's gonna help your session and not hinder it.

[00:32:07] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah.

[00:32:07] What are your thoughts about alternating from if we use autonomic nervous system, terms of more parasympathetic to sympathetic and up and down? So one of the things that I would recommend, I'd be curious on your thoughts, is that when you're resting, try to just rest as best you can. Walk around, like maybe open your gaze, look far away.

[00:32:29] Let your heart rate, come down and recover. And then before a set, try to get more focused on what you're actually gonna do. Have your eyes even become more focused. Like maybe take a few short breaths, something to try to get you a little bit more on. That sympathetic side is what I've noticed with high level athletes who tend to have very good longevity.

[00:32:52] I don't know if they are conscious or unconscious of it, but they appear to do that almost all the time. Like when it's game time. Especially like in the N H L 'cause the shifts are real short. Like when they're on, like the people who are elite are on and when they're off, it's dad, it looks like that guy's gonna go take a nap on the bench.

[00:33:08] Oh yeah, he is like the star player. But he is I'm not in, so why do I don't, I need to be on it, in two minutes then I gotta be on. So they're very good at this kind of oscillating back and forth.

[00:33:18] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Yes. And the same in weightlifting because

[00:33:20] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, weightlifting is a prime

[00:33:21] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** example.

[00:33:22] Yeah. You can't be on. From the second you start your warmup until, you walk onto that platform, do your snatches, then you've got a 15 minute break after your snatches, and then clean and jerks because, this has happened to me. I have been on from, warmup until my snatches, and then by the time I start and jerks, I'm exhausted.

[00:33:43] I'm physically exhausted, I'm mentally exhausted. I don't have anything in the tank left. So again, being able to preserve that energy between my set is often the key that's going to be making the biggest difference between an elite level athlete and maybe someone that, you know, by the end of the game they don't perform anymore.

[00:34:04] So I always say, it's very similar to, a mindfulness training or, just being mindful and you said, steering being present of your environment and getting lost again, like you were saying earlier on your phone or something, but just sitting back, potentially just focusing on your breathing, fully relaxing.

[00:34:22] 'cause if you are tense all the time, your muscles are physically engaged and they are working. And if you've got a two hour game or you're going to be competing and it's, you can't be on for two hours. And I've actually, I read a book a couple of years back about the mindfulness athlete and they talk a lot about basketball players.

[00:34:44] And very similar to what you're saying now is when they're on the court, they are on, but say they're resting or in between, if, they blow the whistle and they've got like a, X amount of time rest. They're so relaxed, you don't see them walk around being super psyched up in their rest time.

[00:35:00] Because they don't need to expend that energy. They just need to be on when it's game time. So getting yourself into the zone is really important, but then also knowing how to get yourself out of that zone is important as well. And again, like training the physical side of things, you have to train the mental side of things and just a great way of doing that is being present not having other distractions around you.

[00:35:27] So like you were mentioning trying to, just putting everything down, sitting down, focusing on breathing, focusing on, relaxing. And then once you are onto the platform and you do your next lift, or you are going onto the field to play your next game, or maybe you are a martial artist and you are going on, onto the mat to.

[00:35:48] If you're a boxer, whatever. Then having to be on, in that second, getting yourself into the zone, getting yourself psyched up really quickly, because that is also something that's important. You need to be able to then psych yourself up really quickly. You don't need to do a whole 30 minute psyching up pride.

[00:36:08] You must be ready on, in that very second and then ready to go. And then at the end of the day, you will just get better results and not waste your energy during rest times or when you actually need to be relaxed, because that was to say, that's when you get stronger or when you do when you rest.

[00:36:26] So focusing on your rest, not just, in between your sessions, but it might be the day before your competition. And some athletes will. Be on the day before their competition. They will be so stressed about walking onto that platform or whatever, and they will just, get themselves psyched up and just, just be on instead of actually saying okay, I'm going to be re relaxing today.

[00:36:53] I'm gonna do everything possible to make sure I'm not on my feet doing something that's gonna take my mind off it. Because also when you think about it, that's very similar to you actually being on or being actively on. Maybe watching something on Netflix reading a book, listening to a podcast, listening to some relaxing music, everything that's going to be benefiting you.

[00:37:15] And that's going to be helping you rest and recover so that when you step onto that platform, all your energy and all your hard work that you've done is now saved so that you can perform your base when you meet to perform your base.

[00:37:30] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** I've, I have a horrible time doing that. I'm better now, like with just some grip competitions.

[00:37:35] 'cause I've just, I had a, I just did the brute force method where I just did 'em so often that eventually I figured it out. I was like, I did a few power lifting things in the past and I was got four days before the meet, I was at the train wreck already. It was just a freaking disaster. And one of the things that helped me, and I don't remember, was it Lenny Wema who I stole this from, was that just repeating to myself ad nauseum that the work has been done.

[00:38:02] There really isn't anything else I'm gonna do the day before or two days before an event that's gonna make me substantially better. Like it's a culmination of all the stuff I've done before. Now my goal is just to display, to the best of my abilities of that. However, there's a lot of stupid stuff I could do to really destroy that.

[00:38:20] And it seems like the longer I work with coaching with athletes, it's like I'm. Like the week before any type big event you're just trying to get 'em to not do anything stupid. And I get it, like you, you have these weird things, like you want to, oh, like I should maybe try 200 milligrams more caffeine.

[00:38:37] Have you ever done this in training? No, let's not do it. Maybe it's better, but let's not risk it. And then you do competitions. And I found my own brain doing that. Oh, what, maybe I should try this or maybe I should try that. It's no that's not a good idea.

[00:38:53] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** The team that works for you.

[00:38:56] And that's why I said, like your physical training, you have to train your mental side of things, but it has to start in your actual training. Yes. You don't wanna try anything because happens. It might not go according to plan. Or like you were saying now I've heard my athletes say exactly the same thing, oh, it's competition day, so I'm just gonna, take a double scoop pre-workout.

[00:39:20] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** I'm like, yeah,

[00:39:23] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** no. So why do you need to do this on competition day? It's working for you in training, so stick with what's working. And that's also if you are a competitive athlete, reflecting on what worked, leading up to the competition and what didn't work. Yeah, it's also a good idea because as soon as you finish your competition, all those.

[00:39:42] Thoughts and what you did is still fresh. And yes, it's gonna take a little bit of time and it's gonna, you're gonna have to maybe remember to actually do this or, make a note or make a, Google calendar and say, okay, the night after my competition, I'm just gonna sit for 20 minutes and just reflect on how my competition went, what worked, what I would change what I wanna do different for the next time.

[00:40:06] And then start implementing that into your training sessions. And it might even be, the type of music you listen to, maybe in training. Normally you listen to really calm music and then, com competition day, you wanna get yourself extra psyched up. So now you're listening to a heart call music.

[00:40:24] There's a funny story. My, my husband did that in one of his weightlifting competitions and it went really badly. Oh.

[00:40:36] He was so burnt out because he was just on all the time. Very similar to what we've spoken about. It's, you need to have that time where you use that energy or preserve that energy so that when you walk onto the platform, it's used for good. But again, if he did this in training and he did the same thing it might've had a better outcome.

[00:40:59] So if you wanna try something new, always try it in training, make sure it works. And if it doesn't work, make adjustments. And then you can always go from there so that, come competition day, you already know what works, what doesn't work. Again, it's in your control. Don't add extra stress to yourself or extra stress to your routine.

[00:41:19] And that's one thing you'll see with top level athletes is they do have such. Strong, routines that they follow that, it, it doesn't change. And one thing they're all good at is if something then does go wrong they are really good at just making those changes and being like, okay, this thing potentially is not going according to plan.

[00:41:41] Maybe their competition schedule is starting a bit later. They're not letting it affecting affect them mentally. So you just have to also be prepared for those things. But again, if you have your routine setting stone and this is what I need to do in order to perform my best, it does help, it does take a lot of stress off you as an athlete.

[00:42:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, no I love that. And even with, let's say general population clients if they can, I've had 'em, what certain pair of shorts you would wear when you train or a couple t-shirts or you've got your training shoes and. Your little training notebooks. I would try to make them in a perfect world, only use those things for that skill, which again, is not always perfect because I'd be interested in your thoughts.

[00:42:28] I think it unconsciously helps 'em with the state change of, okay, I got to the gym and oh, now I have my training clothes on, or I only have my training shoes on. I'm in the training environment of trying to get them to drop all the exterior stuff and to try to be more present there. So with some people, I've even recommended that once they're good at doing that, if they're a high level athlete, then paradoxically I try to screw with them and make sure it doesn't mess 'em up.

[00:43:00] And it's oh, you forgot your favorite socks. Oh, too bad. It's, nobody here caress about that now. But I think you have to, it's a weird thing where you have to train. To get to that level, but then you have to be resilient within that framework. 'cause as like your shoes could not show up, you forget your favorite T-shirt.

[00:43:18] Athletes tend to get very superstitious about a lot of stuff. So you don't wanna get 'em so far that they're fragile. But, you do wanna move in that direction too. I think.

[00:43:28] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Yes. I actually used to be that superstitious athlete. When I was doing karate, and I specifically remember it was one of the really big international competitions that I was competing in.

[00:43:39] And I had this little bag with, I had this little toy that I carried with me. I think it was still like a little golf field. And it had a little band around it. And I had this with me every single competition because, The first time I had it with me, I ended up qualifying for the World Championships, took it with me to the world Championships, did really well one goal, and that was like, okay, these are my good luck charms.

[00:44:03] This is what I need for every single competition. But then what ended up happening is that little bad got stolen. Oh, and immediately I started thinking, am I ever gonna win again? Am I athlete? I don't have my good luck chances and all these kind of things. And I quickly had to realize that, that's not the determining factor if I'm going to win or not win.

[00:44:28] And you can have these little things like you said and have them be. If they help and they make you feel more positive, then that's amazing. But you can't a hundred percent rely on them because anything can happen to it. Like what happened to me? It gets stolen. It gets lost.

[00:44:44] You might be flying and it's in your big bag and your bag doesn't arrive until after competition day. And you have to just, you have to be resilient. You have to know that, these things happen again, what are the things that I can control? I knew I trained my butt for this competition.

[00:45:01] My nutrition was on point. I was ready for the, my competition day. Everything that, I could control that on my body was there. And the exteriors or the extras they are just extras and you can't let that be like the be all and end all at the end of the day. So I'm also a big fan of just telling my athletes as well.

[00:45:23] You can have these things, but don't let this be, the deciding factor if you are going to do well or not do well.

[00:45:33] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Oh, I think that's great advice. Second to last question as we wrap up. So something I've always wondered about is, it's a little bit of a woowoo question, but when someone is getting more psyched up for a big lift in, in anything, could be general person, could be elite level athlete, any thoughts about the mind space in terms of if it's more negative versus positive?

[00:46:00] I've heard a couple of stories around this. Like the one I heard recently was I think it was from Charles Barkley who was saying like his first part of his career he was, he said he played with what he said was a lot of hate and very spiteful because of some things that happened. He really wanted to, prove everyone wrong.

[00:46:16] And then, I don't remember, it was some event happened to him and he realized he didn't have to think that way in order to perform. So he went out and played because he, loved the game of basketball and loved playing In his words. He said he felt like his performance in the latter stages were better because of that.

[00:46:33] Any thoughts on that in terms of like a negative versus a quote positive headspace related to performance?

[00:46:40] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** I can definitely see, how that can potentially be a driver in the beginning if, you wanna do well in something, but in my opinion, it can also become very toxic.

[00:46:51] Sure. How you are thinking that, every time you have to bring back those negative thoughts in order to perform well. And instead of actually using, positive emotions and making sure that. You're focusing on the good around you. You could be it's all intrinsic.

[00:47:09] So you have to be why am I doing this? Why am I putting, my body on the line every single day? I'm not just putting it on the line because I had some traumatic experience. Because if something happens and say the only driving force is that negative aspect or that negative thing that's happened to you, say for example, you get injured as an athlete, what are you now going to be doing about all those negative thoughts?

[00:47:36] How are you going to get rid of it? In my opinion, again, it's more you need to find out, what is what is the positive behind why you wanna compete. It might be that when you step onto that platform, it's your me time, it's the time where you as an athlete can, show all your hard work.

[00:47:54] You have to think of, what makes you whole as an athlete? Yeah, so all in all, I just think, those kind of thoughts can just become really toxic, really bad at the end of the day. And you can't just have negativity drive you. Again, it might be something in the beginning that helps an athlete.

[00:48:11] It might be because I've seen some athletes as well who come from the streets, for example, they might be homeless and, they might be, they started training because they don't wanna end up like, certain family members and they wanna, change their life. Or maybe something happened to a family member and that was the initial driving force.

[00:48:32] But then you also have to realize that, there is positivity to this. Is good about this as well. You found something that you really loved, you found something that you can excel in. And you're doing this because you love the game. And I feel like that to me is going to give you more longevity in the sport, or actually become a better athlete in the long run.

[00:48:54] Instead of just have being Dr. Driven by height.

[00:48:58] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah I would agree with that. And it's always interesting to watch, at least at a high level, different areas of that. So I'm sure you probably watched the documentary, it's a little bit older now on Michael Jordan, I think it was at the Last Dance.

[00:49:11] And I just love that. Obviously I grew up watching Michael Jordan. I'm not a huge basketball fan per se, but the two things that jumped out at me about it were fascinating was one, they interviewed him and all of his teammates and, That he had to sign off on all of it in order for it to be broadcast.

[00:49:30] And they didn't say a lot of, super positive things about him all the time either. But it was fascinating to see the lens of which he viewed everything as, not necessarily that he loved playing basketball, which he did, but his goal was just basically to win at any cost, didn't really care about anything else other than winning.

[00:49:50] And like some of the other players were joking that, like they would try not to piss him off because when he got pissed off, then he would just do everything impossible to win. So just don't make him mad. Whatever you do, which is fascinating. So in the back of my brain, I always wonder man, I bet you that you can probably succeed doing that.

[00:50:07] And again, definitely an outlier. But you just see the cost of everything else that's associated with that, from relationships to business deals, to, whatever. So I just found that whole document series like super fascinating. Yeah.

[00:50:22] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** I think, looking at the bigger picture, like you were mentioning now you can't just be driven by that.

[00:50:26] Yeah, Jordan is like a great example and I'm sure a lot of people will look at that and think, what is the one big thing that like pees me off and that's gonna be my, my driving force. And if it gets you through the door at first and you're like, okay, I wanna prove some people wrong, fine.

[00:50:44] But it has to be at the end of the day, what makes you happy. And I just think, that's something that even I had to deal with as an athlete because I grew up in a house where if. My dad was very tough on me. From the beginning he would say to me, if you don't win, then he would joke about it, but he would always be like, I don't wanna be associated with you.

[00:51:07] You're not my child, kind of thing. That was hard for me. But then I was, do I need to always win in order to have his approval? And if I didn't win, you know what? Then I do remember competing at One World Championships where I ended up getting silver in karate and I was too scared to phone my parents.

[00:51:27] I was very young at the time, but I thought, I'm not worthy then to.

[00:51:34] I'm not ready for, people from the outside to actually see me because I'm like, there sponsors on the line, you have all these people supporting you and if you don't win gold, then who are you? So maybe even with Michael Jordan, for him it was, if he didn't win at all costs, then people might not view him the same.

[00:51:51] And you have to change that mindset, and that's something where, you have to deal with your demons and you have to realize, I'm not doing this for anyone else. I'm not doing this because of what happened. I'm doing this because, this is the thing that makes me happy.

[00:52:04] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Awesome. Thank you so much for all your time and all your wisdom and everything here. Really appreciate it. What, tell us more where people can find out about you. I don't know if you're still doing one-off consults. I know you've got some programs. I know you're busy with some of the training coming up.

[00:52:21] You're gonna be at the Olympic Training Center and doing some work there, so Yeah. Where can people find more from you?

[00:52:27] **Dr Mona Pretorius:** Yeah. I'm co-owner. My husband and I are owners of left, which is our online programming app. So we've got the left underground, so if anyone wants to visit that, they can go to Lift Big com.

[00:52:41] Then also if you wanna follow me on social media, I share, all of my, my training journeys, what I'm currently doing and then also a lot of like mindset stuff. And my Instagram handle is strong by Mona. And I also have helping psychology, so that's where I do my, my sports psychology and working with clients, one-on-one or my it be coaches or, groups of athletes.

[00:53:07] So you can go and visit Helping psychology.com. Yeah, and if you wanna, personally get hold of me, you can either send me a direct message or email me at bone at Helping Psychology. Yeah, that's where you can get hold

[00:53:19] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** of me. Awesome. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it and I love all the content and everything both of you guys are putting out there.

[00:53:26] It's really good stuff, so I would highly encourage people to, to check it out. And thank you again so much for all your time today. We really appreciate it.

[00:53:34] Huge thanks to Dr. Mona for coming on the podcast and sharing all of her amazing knowledge and experience as a high level athlete with us. And highly encourage you. Check out all of her great stuff there. And if you want more information about how to. Recover faster, be more anti-fragile, and just generally a lot harder to kill.

[00:53:57] Check out the Physiologic Flexibility certification. It opens again September 18th, 2023 for only one week. Go to [physiologic flexibility.com](https://www.physiologicflexibility.com). We'll have links down below. You can get onto the Wonderful Daily Newsletter. We'll have all the information there, and then you'll have exclusive access to some.

[00:54:18] Cool bonus items that we'll have for you there. As always, thank you so much for listening to the podcast. Thank you to Dr. Mona for being on the podcast today. Stay tuned. Coming up, we've got tons of great people that will be on the podcast here in the near future, so you don't want to miss out on that.

[00:54:41] We've got everyone from Dr. Hunter Walden talking about ketones and metabolic flexibility. Dr. Karen Heck, talking about astaxanthin, continuous glucose monitors, neuroprotection fasting, some fitness and business

development, autophagy, and even the science of happiness. So all of that coming up this fall here on the podcast.

[00:55:07] Thanks again for listening. We really appreciate it. If you enjoyed this podcast, please send it over to someone you think may also enjoy it. I share it on the old social media and anything else I can do to help you out, please let me know. Any feedback is greatly appreciated. Thank you so much. We'll see you all next week.

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