



In this article Performance Lifestyle Coordinator Peter McCabe offers a few tips to maximise learning

Reviewing and reflection involves thinking about what we have done, how we have done it and how it could be improved for the next time. A process essential in all aspects of life and certainly in performance sport.

Consider the process by which an individual or team might focus on, understand and therefore modify their behaviour. Awareness of the stages in this typical 'Learning Cycle' can ensure that the best opportunity for learning is developed.

STAGE 1 EXPERIENCING:

The individual or team sets their goals and then becomes immersed in the tasks involved in the performing phase. Commitment is essential for 'total immersion'.

STAGE 2 REFLECTING

Stepping back after the performance and reviewing what was experienced. This stage is about 'noticing' and 'reporting' rather than 'solving'. In team situations the reflection should often be an open discussion to share perceptions. It is a good idea to set key questions to guide this process in advance e.g.

- What did we find out that we didn't already know?
- What did we confirm that significantly affects performance?
- What questions still need answering?

STAGE 3 CONCEPTUALISING

Interpreting what happened and why. Identifying possible connections between events. Theorising to help understanding. Recognition of limitations in the explanations derived. In team situations this stage can help develop cohesiveness within the unit through shared understanding of the events that took place.

STAGE 4 PLANNING

Using the understanding. Making predictions about what is likely to happen the next time and what action should be taken to improve. Examination of the programme and adjustments in its structure and balance. In team situations the planning stage should be a joint process with a clear consensus and expression of the will to act.

The timing of detailed formalised review will vary, for example following a specific performance, a period of preparation, a 4-year cycle etc. It is important to recognise that the outcomes of the process will need to be sub-divided into those targeted for short term, medium term and long term change.

In summary, the real value of such a structured review process is that it helps us to exploit learning situations more effectively.

Remember... change in behaviour (i.e. results) begins with change in thinking!

Those able to do so will be best positioned to maximise athlete development.