

Building Strength from Stress

- [00:00](#) Hi, I'm Kathy Rinaldi, US Fed Cup captain and you are listening to compete like a champion.
- [00:10](#) J: welcome to compete like a champion. You're here with Dr. Larry Lauer mental skills specialists and coach Johnny Parkes with USTA player development. Today we're going to dive into the topic of stress and how we build strengths from stress.
- [00:24](#) L: Nice. Let's do it.
- [00:26](#) J: Alrighty. So I think it's really important as we tee this up, we're going to have the Mickster, uh, joining in with his here, our producer here in the studio.
- [00:35](#) M: I'm glad to be here.
- [00:36](#) J: You come out and put things in perspective. So, so today, here's how I think we should approach it. I mean, we have, we have players that deal with certain things. We have coaches, we have the workplace, all these different environments. And I think it'd be really important to first of all, dive into understanding just how important stress is in our lives. Uh, from a, from a management standpoint, how we manage stress, but also just just getting a base background into, you know, how obvious stress is in our lives.
- [01:01](#) L: Well, I was, I was thinking about this before. We do actually plan these by the way. So sometimes it doesn't sound like it, but we do plan these so we're not stressed when we get on air. But I was taking a look at, at some of the stats and again, one of the things that hit me was, when you look at college students for example, there's just one stat, they report feeling anxious. So now stress is one thing. Anxiety is this worry that can come from stress, but great stress. 50% of students in a college health survey said they felt overwhelming anxiety in the last 12 months. Not just like anxious but overwhelming anxiety. So a level where they're not functioning well. So, and we know that reports of anxiety are on a rise in America. There's concerns that this is going to be the next mental health crisis and there are going to be a lot of people suffering from anxiety and, and certainly stress. And I think it's really important to talk about stress because stress in and of itself inherently is not negative. It's not positive either. There's distress and there's you stress. I mean, but stress is stress. It's how you look at it.
- [02:03](#) J: We talk about, and we've talked on previous podcasts about how nerves, being nervous is completely natural. It's completely normal and how we need to approach that with, we want to normalize it. You know, stress sounds like it's pretty similar to that and that it's normal and it's okay like being nervous as a form of stress I guess, but, but then stress that leads to maybe potentially more catastrophic things down the road, but.

[02:25](#)

L: Well, we know that that stress over time leads to health issues, right? Heart disease, high blood pressure, issues like that. But at the same time it, if anybody's, I think it's Amy Cuddy, she did her Ted talk on how stress is our friend. This idea that stress equals growth. I mean if you think about it, you go into the gym, Johnny, I know Mick doesn't go the gym, but when you go to the gym... I'm joking. He's solid.

[02:50](#)

M: Watch it, Larry.

[02:50](#)

J: Yeah, he's solid.

[02:51](#)

L: When you go to the gym, what do you do to your body? You stress your muscles and then you rest, you recover and they grow. There's microtears breakdowns, the muscles and the fibers, they heal. You're stronger. The belief now is that stress can have the same result on us as well. It's not a negative thing per se. It's actually creating growth. I mean, if you think about in your life, all the important things you've done, I would say probably all of them came with some level of stress.

[03:16](#)

J: Well, yeah, and I kinda, I feel the, I want to get to the point of stress to challenge my decision-making and what I do in distress, you know? So how far can I push myself walls, managing my emotions and control and my decision making. But if it gets, got to a point where it was too overwhelming, you know, it could kind of boil over. I know for me, growing up, the school that I went to, it was heavy academics and then I went there for tennis too. So it was heavy academics, heavy tennis, and then you know, you've got all the other things that was associated with just being a kid, right? And then it would come to a point, especially when, you know, the tournament schedule got a little heavier or exams, you know, scheduled a little heavier and things would slowly start to boil up and I would get to a point where I was completely stressed and didn't manage it very well. And I would take those that stress out and emotion, all my emotions out on the court, whether it was, you know, not behaving the right way that you need to behave on court to, to have a productive session. And there'd be times where my coach would have to pull me off court and say, look, I can tell you dealing with a lot here, but probably more productive right now that you take some time, you rest, you focus on what, what is important and don't let this get to a point where it becomes catastrophic. And so that's something that I really struggled with when I was a kid and probably still even now in, in, you know, in the workplace, around the office, on the court, you know, it, it, it's still something that challenges you. I just think I'm probably a little bit better at dealing with it. But...

[04:39](#)

L: Yeah, I think you are. I dealt with, yes in my own way, where as a young athlete, as a teenager didn't deal with stress and anxiety very well and would get tight and sometimes play great and other times not and not knowing why and not having the answers, but then getting into sports psychology and then going to graduate school actually can be very stressful for those who've gone on to get a master's or a PhD or an EDD or whatever it may be. They can be very

stressful because of the expectations, the workload that you're under, the, the importance of each time you are assessed because you might only be assessed at mid and at the end of the semester and all your, your points came from those time periods. So you had to deliver. Right. So there was a pretty high level stress and I had to learn how to deal with my stress better so that I could actually get through grad school. So people say like, Oh, he's got a PhD in sports psychologist, he probably was always good at this. No, actually to get through graduate school and say, survive but thrive, which I think I did, I actually had to get much better at managing my stress and there's a number of things that I learned to do from my professors or other students that were in school at the same time, who were older and had gone through it for a couple of years. It was invaluable for me. Without those people, I don't know if I get through graduate school, like they taught me so much through that experience, so I think probably everybody who's listening to this can relate, right? Mick, that the, we go through certain things and we learn more about how to handle our stress over time through our experiences and some people get it quicker than others. Some people are more skilled, but we all, we all deal with different stressors in our workplace, in our lives that we have to learn how to manage.

[06:11](#)

M: Right? The key for me to eliminate stress is just to try to be as proactive as possible and eliminate it before it even gets there. And one thing like having kids is, has taught me a lot because I was always the type of guy that would never say no to something. So I'd have 18 things going on instead of saying, have a plan, stick with the plan and if you can do that, you're going to alleviate a lot of things. Like as a tennis player for my son, you know, I said, Hey, if you want to be a great player, you might have to sacrifice going to that birthday party because that's gonna get in the way of your plan or show up half hour late. Then when you start letting things get in the way of your plan, now you're stressed out or you know, because you didn't make the birthday party or do you want to be stressed out because you're not prepared to play. What's more important to you and, like Johnny said, what's more important, focus on what's important. And you do that by making a plan and then hopefully you'll filter out a lot of those things before they even make it into your system. You know what I'm saying?

[06:59](#)

L: Yeah. For my son for example, for his games was baseball or hockey. I was actually talking to Jen Fallon who's our strength and conditioning coach here on campus. But I get him, he wants to be at his hockey practice or game at least 30 minutes before. Like he's a stickler on it, no Dad, we got to leave and I'm like good and we're, we're leaving. Sometimes he's not ready to go and I have to get on his case, but he's 10 so you expect that. But.

[07:21](#)

J: That's pretty good though.

[07:22](#)

M: Yeah, that's great for a 10 year old.

[07:24](#)

L: And for baseball, we're there an hour early and he warms up and he hits and he throws and, and I've shown them how when he cuts corners on that, that he

doesn't feel the same way, you know? So what Mick's pointing out is, well, preparation is one of your best remedies for honestly for distress.

[07:39](#)

J: I mean for me, I mean going back to my example I gave when I was at school when I was a kid, I mean I actually went, I'm not ashamed to say this but, you know, I went to go and see someone and then we had, we had somebody that was able to support us at school. I was away from family and originally I did not buy into it. I just sat there and try to wind the clock down and I actually tried to mess with the person that was trying to help me. And then once I...

[08:00](#)

L: Is this surprising at all?

[08:02](#)

M: It all made sense now.

[08:04](#)

J: I think like every wall and they think, Oh, I don't need to talk to anyone about my issues. I don't really have an issue. I just need to get on with it. Right? But once I calm down from it all, and the first session went by, second session, right? The third session went by, started actually feeling a bit better when I started talking about a few things and I may have opened up a tiny bit like on the second session and it felt good and I opened up a little bit more in the third session and then that the greatest thing that I got from it was a strategy where simply like if I'm really that hot and bothered over things, writing them all down and then she, she didn't tell me to do this but essentially then burn it afterwards or throw it away or do something where it's like releases that stress. So you write it all out, you get it all off your chest and then that, that symbolizing of throwing it away, it's just letting it all go. That was something that was really helpful for me. And I know there's probably many other strategies, right, Larry, but that, that was something that I thought as a 13-14 year old that was struggling to cope with the demands of being a young athlete and you know, a student and social as their social awkwardness at that age too. And where to fit in and where are you finding your place in the world type stuff. That to me was extremely helpful to also guide my path, not just to have a stress relief, get everything off my chest and release it all. But it actually helped me navigate, I guess, what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it.

[09:21](#)

L: Very good. I appreciate you sharing that.

[09:23](#)

M: We did the same thing with a rock. We wrote what was stressing us out or when we were convicted of and we held out of that all day and it was the weight bearing down on you at the end and at the end of the day we just threw it in the Lake. Got rid of it.

[09:35](#)

L: That's another thing. That's another good one. And then the Lake threw it back at you.

[09:39](#)

M: My dog went and got it.

[09:40](#)

L: Yeah. Well I, you know, I think one thing is important to do here and we're going to dive more into ways to deal with stress in the workplace and in life, but you know, what is stress? I mean being on the same page, you know, stress is psychophysiological sympathetic response that's going on in the body, right? And sometimes it's think about fight or flight or freeze responses, but it's a perception of what's going on in your environment, right? Something's important to me, so I'm going to feel an elevated level of stress, right? Something is a threat to me. I'm going to feel an elevated level of stress because that's your body's response to get you ready to go. Something's important. There's a threat. I need to be ready to move. I need to be ready to fight. The freeze response really is not a very helpful coping response that people talk about that often comes from when you're feeling overwhelmed at work or in school or in life where people freeze, especially when they feel they have a lot of things they have to do and are overwhelmed by the the mountain of work. People say, I have a mountain of papers on my desk. They are saying more now, I have a mountain of emails or projects or whatever. So, but that stress in and of itself is not a negative thing. It actually can create growth and you need it in your life to help you get stronger, get better. And that's really, you know, the title of this episode is using that strength to build, or excuse me, using your stress to build strength. And when you get in that situation where you're feeling stressed, one of the best things you can do is remember, Hey, this is a growth opportunity. And look at the opportunity. This is what we do with our players all the time. It's normal to be stressed about an important match. It's important to you. There is some threat. You could lose and be out of the tournament and you could lose money. You could lose ranking. But look at the opportunity that you have. You can gain ranking, you can gain money, you can get better. You get to do the thing that you love and now you can start working more towards the more core intrinsic things that make you want to play, right? To compete in the game that you love and getting better and see how good you can be and when you start connecting with those things, then stressful situations actually can be reinterpreted as exciting.

[11:39](#)

J: Yeah, absolutely. From all this, the things that you've come across the research, has there been any definitive research around the intrinsically motivated people either to deal with stress a lot better or actually have less stressful lives than people who are more extrinsically motivated?

[11:55](#)

L: and I'm going to have to look that up again, Johnny. I don't remember off hand. I think a lot of times what we've seen in the literature with extrinsic versus intrinsic, that extrinsic, they're not going to enjoy practices much. They're more prone to cheat because it's all about the outcome and so there's a possibility that they might experience more stress, but I'm not sure of that because intrinsically motivated to get better to compete, they still feel that importance of what they do now. They may feel more control over it cause they're focusing on aspects of the performance maybe that they control, but nonetheless, I think there's going to be elevated stress for everyone. Now you've got to separate that from anxiety and anxiety is cognitive worry. And when you put worry combined with a lot of energy or a lot of stress, then you

have the opportunity for one of these big stressful responses, a big freeze response where you know, a, a student in college instead of studying and getting ahead on things is going on and partying and avoiding what they need to do. Or a young person gets into a testing situation and I can't think of a thing, right? They get one of these freeze responses or someone gets uncomfortable and they have a flight response when they need to sustain fight. So they go ahead and they hit a bunch of drop shots, trying to hit 120 mile per hour serves and, and get the heck out. They pull the shoot, as I say, or they say, Ah, my hamstring hurts and they, they pull out, right? So you see these things, but typically it's not distress per se, it's when it's combined with a lot of cognitive worry or anxiety about what it is that you're doing these doubts. So to Mick's point about preparation, having a plan, knowing what's most important in what you're, what you need to get done. And then what I always say, I borrow from Aerosmith, chip away at the stone. If you got a mountain of things chip away at the stone because there's only one way to get at it, you gotta take the first step and usually you feel a lot better when you start taking the first step. But you're going to have to clear the deck, the emotional deck before you can take that first step.

[13:48](#)

J: As somebody kind of on the outside looking in, knowing that we can't really see people, well hear people's thoughts. What are some of...

[13:55](#)

L: Some people think I read their minds, but that's not true.

[13:57](#)

J: Are you reading mine right now?

[13:59](#)

L: Yeah, you're hungry.

[14:00](#)

J: Yeah, I'm always hungry. But what are some of the like common signs, symptoms, uh, that you may be see from the outside looking in that kind of raises a little, you know, red flags here that like maybe I, maybe this person needs some help as this? There's just some things that don't connect or add up here and what do you see?

[14:21](#)

L: Sure.

[14:21](#)

J: When it gets to that point, and then how do you, how do you intervene and help with that?

[14:25](#)

L: Let me talk about it two ways. One is just a typical stress response. So increased sweating, increased heart rate, more shallow and fast breathing. You know, hair going up in the back of the neck, blood is leaving the the middle of your body and going out to the extremities so you can't fight or take flight. So you start to feel the butterflies. That's the blood leaving, you know, the digestive system and it's moving out because digestion to this point is not that important. We've got to survive here. So, so you start to see these things and certainly with stress you also get a narrowing, usually a focus usually on what's

most uncomfortable. Now when stress or anxiety gets to a point where it's people are not resilient or adapting to their environment, meaning they're not able to effectively cope and move forward in their environment, they're not functioning well in their environment. That's when you start to have concerns. So if a person is late for work often, if they aren't able to complete assignments on time or their work's not very good, if you see them often needing breaks because they are emotional or breaking down, you say something and they're highly sensitive to it. So there's a number of things you can look at. You can look at people's faces though. On a tennis court, what do we look for? We look at that, what I call the deer in headlights look. The eyes are wide, the mouth is kind of closed, right? And the jaws tied like, Oh crap kind of look, right? The deer in headlights say, Oh I'm, I'm freezing right now. I'm, I'm struggling. And so you can see that in people as well, I think in the workplace and in life. But typically when it gets to a level where it's important to get therapy as certainly when it starts impacting a person's life and are not able to function in a way that's healthy for them, that's adapted. So that can mean again, you know, missing assignments, being late, struggling with relationships, getting in a lot of fights with people or being overly sensitive about things. It doesn't mean that who they are, what they're doing is wrong, they're just going through an experience. And I think it's important to remember that physical health, mental health is on a continuum. At times you're doing well, you're thriving, you're resilient, you're functioning well, and other times you're not doing as well. And sometimes it goes all the way down to the bottom of the continuum where you really are [inaudible], you're unable to function well at all. And we've got to get beyond this stigma that, okay, so a part of the population, they're mental midgets, they struggle, they need to be in therapy and the rest are fine. No, that's not, not the reality. And this is something that Dr. Hainline at the NCAA has been huge on pushing and that is the idea that treating mental health concerns the same as you would physical health concerns. See someone that can help you with it because if you twisted your ankle, you would get help. If you hit your head, you get help. What if you're struggling emotionally? You should get help because there's people who can help you as, as Johnny talked about earlier with his example. And you might not even believe it at first and before you know you're actually getting a lot from it. So that's my kind of spiel. But again, if a person's struggling to be effective in their environment and then when you start to see in multiple environments, they're not able to really move forward or not able to put effort into something that they used to love. And then the big one is when they, when they're changing, the other school's getting worse, they're not as dedicated to their sport. They're lacking energy. You start to see these kinds of things, their, their friendship groups change, then you should, you should start being concerned. So it doesn't mean that there's an issue, but you should be asking questions at that point. Yeah, Mick, what are some of the things you see? I mean you, you know, with a kid that's playing tennis, balancing school or just having a fairly hectic family life, right, with four kids and you know, is there certain things that you see in the home environment, this stuff builds up, how does it affect them or how does it affect you as well? Cause I would imagine it's pretty stressful for you as well.

[18:03](#)

M: Uh, well for me, yeah, for me having four kids alleviates a lot of stress because that cuts down on a lot of decisions I have to make in terms of, Hey man, do you want to go out and do this? Sorry I've got tee ball tonight and that's what I'm talking about. That's the plan. They're number one, they're first, the family's first. So that alleviates all that outside pressure, which is great because otherwise I'm an extrovert, I like to do everything. So that makes it easier for me just to say no. And I think that's important just to teach your kids to say no is going to alleviate a lot of stress. I mean my job as a dad is to, hopefully, when they leave the house that they can handle stress on their own. And so one example I give my kids is I say, Hey, if you tell your friend you will help him clean the garage. And then another friend says, Hey, we've got passes to Disney. Do you want to go? You know, you'll think of all these ways to try to get out of cleaning the kids' garage so you can go to Disney. But then when that happens for the rest of your life, you're going to be stressed out about the decision you made. Instead of just saying, no, I told this friend I'm going to clean the garage. Then you feel great about yourself. And so just having that plan again, you know, and that's just key and not trying to, you know with kids these days, they don't make a plan until the last second. They see what's available on the board, on the menu, and then at five minutes to eight they're like, I'm doing that.

[19:13](#)

L: What feels good in the moment?

[19:14](#)

M: Exactly. And it's just all that...

[19:16](#)

L: Youngsters, you know.

[19:17](#)

M: ...Instant gratification. So for me, I just try to teach them to make the right choices so they don't get that stress. But as a dad, you get stressed because you're trying to allow them to make the choices and you see them making the wrong choices. The example I gave you before, we started about a tournament this weekend, and you got to let them make that choice and see, hopefully learn from that choice that it was the wrong choice, instead of telling them. Originally I would tell them and all it would happen was they'd be crying, I'd be upset. My wife would say, he said the wrong thing again. But when you let them make the choice and then you talk through it afterwards and they realize, I could've done this instead and I would have played better today if I would've done this program. Then the relationship's still there and then they learned from it.

[20:00](#)

J: Yeah. I think from a, from a coaching standpoint or even as someone who's a new dad, it's, it's pretty remarkable to see the impact of sleep. When you're coaching a lot of juniors, you get to, obviously, get to see a lot of different emotions and they come out of different, different environments. But one of the, when I was coaching back before I took the job with USTA, one of the most obvious things that I saw was if there was an uncharacteristic change of, of behavior from one day to the next, a lot of the, I would quite often, you know, they would, they were tired, they lacked the energy on the court. They just weren't giving as full effort as they usually do and more often than not, I would

come back to that they just didn't have a good night's sleep. Well then you ask, well, you know, it was something on your mind and usually is the case that they just have a lot of things on their mind and it's keeping them awake and it stops them from having a good night's rest and then not affects in the next day. And then their decision-making is often they're quite short, you know, people can get quite short with people. I know I, I did a lot of the time and so you know, that that often the case is, was to me, a help in leading into understanding what the person is going through and not necessarily saying to them, I know how I can help you. Because there was often a lot of times where I couldn't help them. A lot of the cases, it was, they were, I couldn't understand what they were going through. There were certain social issues or heavy work or, you know, school schedule. I just, you know, it's hard and so you want to be more empathetic with them and, and figure out how we can help them the best in getting through it. And so, but often as I, you know, it's the same when I look at my, my two year old, when she has a great night's sleep, more often than not the next day, she's great. Like she's loving life and you know, she wants something and you have to say, well no, you know, not gonna have that. And she'll get over it pretty quick and then, you know, go on to the next thing. But then when she's had a really bad night, then she, sure she's got a bit more of a temper on her. Right. You tell her no, and she throws the biggest fit cause she's stressed, right? She's not had a, she's not had a good night's sleep. She's a [inaudible], you know, I don't know. So she's a, so that's gotta be an understanding of where it starts with. And quite often it's slower. You says that rest and recovery. If I, I rest my body after I go to the gym, so the next day I can prepare if I don't rest my mind and shut that off, you know? So I guess, you know, stress is normal and it happens in people's lives. How, how do you, you know, how do we reduce that stress? What are strategies to help us cope with that so that we can function effectively under stress?

[22:21](#)

L: Well, I think the first thing is to rethink stress and realize that a lot of times things we consider stressful, if we look at it differently, it's actually not that stressful. You know, we've got it, we've got this schedule, Mick was talking about his schedule and so stressful, like tonight I gotta drive down I-4 to Maitland to get to the hockey rink by 6:30, so Hillary has time to get dressed and be ready for practice at seven. Now I could be freaked out and stressed out about, you know, driving 40 minutes and traffic and wanting to be there on time or be like, you know, it's time with my son and we get to talk and we can talk rock music and we can talk sports and have a good time in the car and then he gets there and he'll have plenty of time to prepare. And, and uh, he'll be ready to go for his practice and I get to watch him practice while I sit in the stands and enjoy that. So it'll be, if I look at it differently than I can actually, I'm really looking forward to tonight, you know, instead of like, Oh God, I got this drive and it's going to be tough. One of the things that I've learned is something that I've talked to a lot of the players about recently is looking at it from two perspectives; Want to versus Have to and make two columns in your life and in your tennis. What do you want to do? But also what are you telling yourself you have to do? Because have to's feel forced upon you and here you go, we're, we're spiking up to stress, right? If we go back to society of how you perceive

things, if you're saying, look, I get the opportunity to play this weekend, I get the opportunity to coach these kids. And they, yeah, they struggle with their attention span. But guess what? That's normal for this age. So if I can find ways to think about things of want to versus have to, that can really help to alleviate stress. When you look at work, for example, I get to go and work in this beautiful campus every day with great people, including Mick, you know.

[23:58](#)

M: Thanks, Larry.

[23:58](#)

L: You're welcome. I, I knew you needed that. So, but in looking at that way versus I could come in and say, ah, another day in the salt mines and it's going to be rough and I'm tired and don't want to do this. So I think the first thing is how you're looking at things and changing your perspective. I think secondly, win the morning. We've heard this mentioned before maybe in the media or a lot of CEOs and athletes are talking about this, but getting up in the morning and doing some form of mindfulness. It could be yoga, it could be a breathing exercises, meditation, visualization of your day and what you're going to achieve successfully. But what this does is it brings you back to the present. Exercises is another great thing. These things bring you to the present and in the present, a lot of these anxieties and doubts and fears, they don't live in the present. You're just, you're being, you're doing right. But the past is where the judgment lies in a lot of the negativity and how we bring ourselves down. And then the future is where a lot of the what ifs and the doubts and the uncertainties lie that spike our anxiety and our stress. So to me, the more we can be present with whatever we're doing, the more you're going to enjoy life and the more you're going to manage your stress level.

[25:04](#)

M: It's like performance versus outcome. Cause you think stress is related to a lot of outcome goals and I'm not going to get there or this person's not going to like me or I don't have enough time to get all this stuff done, so I'm not gonna make this happen, where if you think about just what you're doing at the moment, performance wise.

[25:19](#)

L: Yeah. just think of it this way, those kinds of things elevate the stress level because the threat is increased. The importance is increased, right, and you have the opportunity to say, look, you could say it doesn't matter if she likes me, I'm there to do a job, or you know what? You're being hard on yourself or you're seeing this incorrectly. She doesn't dislike you. There's nothing there. Right? So you have these opportunities where you start to reframe what you're thinking or counter it so that you can remove some of the anxiety-provoking thoughts and that's going to lower the anxiety, which is going to lower your stress. But the stress itself is a reaction to the thought that you're having. And then the accompanying emotion. I feel anxious. I feel jittery. Right? I feel tense because of the way I'm thinking. So if you can change the way you're thinking about things, then you reduce those things so you can attack the thoughts, you can attack the physical side of it by doing breathing and exercises like that as well to deal with the symptoms. Right. One of the things we know is that when we get in his fight or flight sympathetic response, that is turning off the front part of

your brain where you do a lot of your reasoning and your analysis, right? So to turn that front part of your brain back on so you can problem solve and make good decisions under stress, you gotta go to your breathing. Why do you think Navy seals and other special forces practice mindfulness and breathing? It's not because those guys are all monks. It's because they know it helps them perform in high stress environments, right? So I think a few, if you win your morning, you, you, that helps you to look at things differently. It helps you to focus in the present. It makes you see the, hopefully the want-to's versus the have-to's change your perspective. And then you guys have already given some great strategies like saying no and focusing on what matters and getting it done, not waiting till the last minute to do stuff. Prioritizing things in the day, managing your time and taking time to make connections with people and talk. I mean I think all of these things are great ways to manage your stress, but at the heart of it is a way you're talking to yourself and if you're managing that better, you're going to respond better to the stress that that is in your life.

[27:25](#)

J: And I guess that's where it comes back to winning the morning. That mindfulness, that visualization helps you get into that, that thinking time, that thinking space.

[27:32](#)

L: Yeah, I woke up this morning and I just didn't feel right, like a little jittery. I don't know why and maybe it was because I got this big trip coming up. I'm like, okay, I'm going to do two minutes of the box breathing. And after that I felt good. And then I spent time with my daughter Sarah and I felt even better. And we joked around and talked about what she was eating for breakfast and what she was doing that day. And suddenly I was present. And I started the morning a little bit jittery and a little bit ahead of myself and I wasn't present. Right. So, and that happens to people all the time.

[27:59](#)

J: Yeah. And it, you know, one of these things that pop up on social media about successful people and what they do, and although I saw something a couple of weeks ago about successful CEOs like Richard Branson or Mark Zuckerberg or people like that, right. Managers that run obviously huge companies and a lot of them, they wake up early, he was a common trait. They wake up early and they like to start that day off with yoga or exercising because that's their outlet for their, for their stress and how they like to get to bed earlier or if they go to bed later, how they then want to stick to that routine because the routine is what makes them comfortable each and every day. So how much of that plays a part in reducing stress too?

[28:39](#)

L: I think that plays a big part. You could just look at, you know, coaches who are listening or parents. When something changes in the practice that's a surprise or in a match warm up or preparation for a match, stress level's immediately enhanced. It's, it's elevated, right? Because this is new, this is different. Different can be threatening, right? You know you're a bit off of your normal so you're not going to be exactly comfortable. So again, it depends on how big that change is. You know, if you, if you normally go to bed at nine and you go to bed at 9:30, you might not really have that much effect. But if you normally go to

bed at nine and you, you stay up till one for some reason to watch your favorite Netflix show or you're staying up to watch hockey, which is what I'm doing. But you know, then you, you could experience that and, and also know what's happening was sleep is sleep in a final stages of your sleep in the an hour seven and eight your brain is doing a lot of its repair work on your brain. Our, excuse me, your brain is doing a lot of its own repair work. And so the getting out the toxins, cleaning things up, pruning off things you're not using and strengthening connections in the brain is all going on. And if you're not getting that sleep first, you're not recovering as well, but your brain also is, is not going to be as healthy over time. So you know there are some definitely some important adverse affects by not getting sleep that you need. So now can you go a day without getting good rest or two days? Yeah, you can and you can still be productive. But over time that's going to have increasing native impact on your well-being, your productivity, your relationships. So the more you can get into your routines, the better. Now taking routines to the perspective like performance routines are like what our director of coaching, Ola Malmqvist, was saying [inaudible] your friend on court, this is something you can rely on. It brings you back to something you can control in a, in a chaotic environment. Why do you think basketball players have free throw routines? Well, when everybody's going nuts behind the basket, I'm going to my routine so I can focus in the present on my task. So these routines allow you to kind of filter out a lot of the noise. It's going to elevate your stress and anxiety and just dial into what is most important at that moment, so people are thinking about their workplace, have your routines, have your morning routine, have your routines during the day that are going to help you to be focused when you want to do your work and hopefully enjoy it.

[30:56](#)

J: Awesome. Well, we're running short on time here, Larry. So give us a, give us a couple little quick tips for the listeners on managing stress and some coping mechanisms.

[31:05](#)

L: I think number one is to be aware when it's spiking, when you're feeling it, recognize the symptoms, recognize the situations, the triggers as I call them, that that set off a higher stress level and your anxiety and your, you're a increasing level of intensity of emotion. So if you're aware of these things and you can anticipate and have a plan on how to deal with them, I think many times just being able to accept what is because I don't control it is a great way. And remember what, what your have-to is versus want-to, so using appropriate self-talk or discipline, self talk and just trying to see things in a different way, reframing it, you know that what I have to do is either something that I need to do because it's important for me or you know what? It's not as bad as I'm looking at. It actually could be very good. I'm going to do a job interview, so look at the opportunity side of things. So I think those are a few key things. And then like we said, win the morning, you know, and then have great routines and sleep. So

[31:57](#)

J: awesome. Well that wraps it up for this week's episode of compete like a champion. Thanks to the Mickster, our producer, for joining in on that one. And

that's, that's Dr. Larry Lauer and coach Johnny signing off. If you want any more information, you can go to our website, USTA, uh, excuse me, playerdevelopment.usta.com and until next time. We'll catch you later.