ISSUE 11
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HIGHER STATE

THE MAGAZINE FOR HI[illegible]PERFORMERS

LESSONS FROM THE RINGMASTER

Ex-lawyer Zoe Baldock shares what the circus can teach us about work, life and performance

IS IT TIME TO STEP IT UP?

Is the "10,000 steps" target misleading us?

SAY HI TO YOUR FEARS

We all have them ,so why do we let them get in our way?

I'LL HAVE A SIDE OF FAT WITH THAT

Your brain performs better when it gets the right fuel

CHOOSE YOUR THEME

Master this approach to get more value out of each and every day

Out of the box

Over the last couple of years, I've noticed that companies are slowly coming to the realisation that people can be multi-talented and multi-skilled - and that this actually adds new, more competitive dimensions to the way they think and perform.

In the past, it was widely believed and accepted that a person could only really be good at one thing - for example, an accountant couldn't possibly be creative and a muscle-bound gym junkie couldn't possibly be intellectually-driven.

However, these myths are being dispelled. In fact, multi-disciplinary tendencies are common in the high performers I meet. High performers have an ability to effortlessly transition from one highly skilled arena to the next, to constantly learn and to succeed at a high level in whatever they put their minds to.

This is why I was so excited to interview Zoe Baldock, who boasts credentials including junior British Champion ice skater, qualified lawyer and international circus performer!

Abi

Transforming People. Transforming Performance

Issue 11, September / October 2019

Mind + Body + Business

STRATEGIES & STRUCTURES FOR PEAK PERFORMANCE

Is your team focused, productive and getting results?

Are your people energised, forward-thinking and bringing their "A" Game to work?

We help executives and teams to **build high performance habits** and achieve results with more energy, more focus and less stress - on a sustainable and healthy basis.

Our unique **High Performance Formula** is a 360-degree system that enables teams to achieve top performance - addressing Business, Psychological and Physiological factors that impact long-term success.

Combining extensive business and coaching experience with skills as a certified fitness, mindset and nutrition professional, Abi can help you to take your team to the next level.

Speak to Abi about team **training**, executive performance **coaching**, **consultancy** and in-house **programme development**.

Abigail Ireland - Peak Performance Strategist

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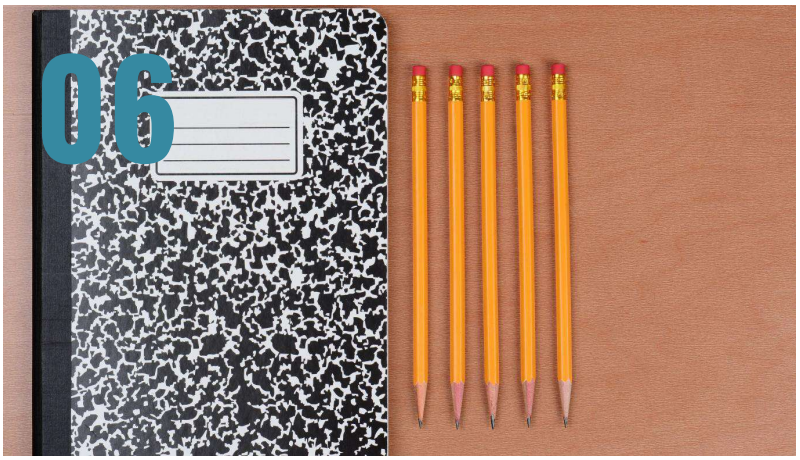
WHAT'S IN STORE



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CLICK HERE for upcoming PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMES

WORK WITH ABIGAIL

Ready to lift your team's performance, productivity, engagement and results?

Abi works with organisations to amplify team performance and productivity through workshops, coaching and strategic in-house programme development. She focuses on business productivity strategies whilst also incorporating psychological and physiological drivers of top performance (for example, mindset, attitude, exercise, nutrition and sleep).

Abi's corporate career led her to work internationally in private equity deal origination, acquisitions, banking, strategy and business management for over 13 years. She went on to launch her own businesses in the wellbeing and education fields, using her additional skills as an NLP Practitioner, Master Personal Trainer and Nutrition Coach to bring a unique offering to clients that covers all aspects of peak performance.

Abi's integrated **High Performance Formula** can be applied to any team to boost productivity, energy, focus, engagement and quality results.

1 WORKSHOPS

- Practical, value-packed workshops that have an immediate impact on productivity and create a high-performance mindset.
- Workshops on topics including Business Productivity, Thriving at Work, Mastering Team Dynamics, The High Performance Mindset, Eating for Performance and more. Also tailored workshops catering for specific business requirements.

>> CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE <<

2 COACHING

- Tailored coaching sessions for individuals and small groups, often in the weeks and months following workshop sessions - designed to promote accountability and embed long-term performance habits.
- Opportunity to tackle issues & roadblocks that sabotage performance.

>> CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE <<

3 STRATEGY

- In-house programmes and initiatives tailored to organisational and team requirements - research, analysis and strategy development.
- Design and development of solutions to increase productivity, boost engagement, lift performance and achieve objectives.

>> CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE <<

2020 PROGRAMME LAUNCH

The 2020 schedule is now set and we are pleased to be re-running two core programmes. Each programme approaches PEAK PERFORMANCE habit-building from different angles. We combine virtual learning with interactive coaching, to give you a convenient way to enhance your performance at work and beyond. Contact **abi@abigailireland.com** for info and to reserve your spot.

Next Programme Launch: 11 FEBRUARY 2020

Exclusive 6-week group coaching programme comprising six 90 minute interactive webinars (7pm, UK Time Zone), tailored to meet the needs of high achieving professionals.

Interact with a cohort of 9 other like-minded peers to build self-awareness, develop skills and master strategies to put you in control of your work and life.

Modular programme combining science, psychology, theory, practice and coaching support to give you everything you need to master "the art of saying no".

Discover what you can do differently to shift the way you operate, both in and out of work - giving you more control, confidence, clarity and time back for yourself.

Group Size: Capped at 10 individuals per cohort

Next Client Intake Starts: 5 JANUARY 2020

Tailored individual nutrition coaching programme

Daily lessons, habits and workouts to keep you on track, motivate and inspire you.

Coach interaction to check in and support you throughout.

Develop healthy long-term habits, to set you up for success, both physically and mentally.

Opportunity to really understand your deepest drivers, motivations and obstacles so that you can optimise your physical performance and capability.

Science and research backed programme that works.

Coaching Spots: Capped at 10 individuals per intake

PRODUCTIVITY: The Power of Theming

If you want to make progress, group it up

When it comes to getting things done, one of the biggest drains on our cognitive capacity is having to switch up what we are doing, jump from one task to the next and constantly shift our brain from strategic to tactical thinking - and then back again. This all takes a lot of effort and we can often feel some kind of mental resistance as we progress through the day.

A solution is to chunk up your days and, preferably, your week. If you have a lot of tactical, operational or administrative tasks to get through, it makes sense to batch these up and work your way through them one after the other.

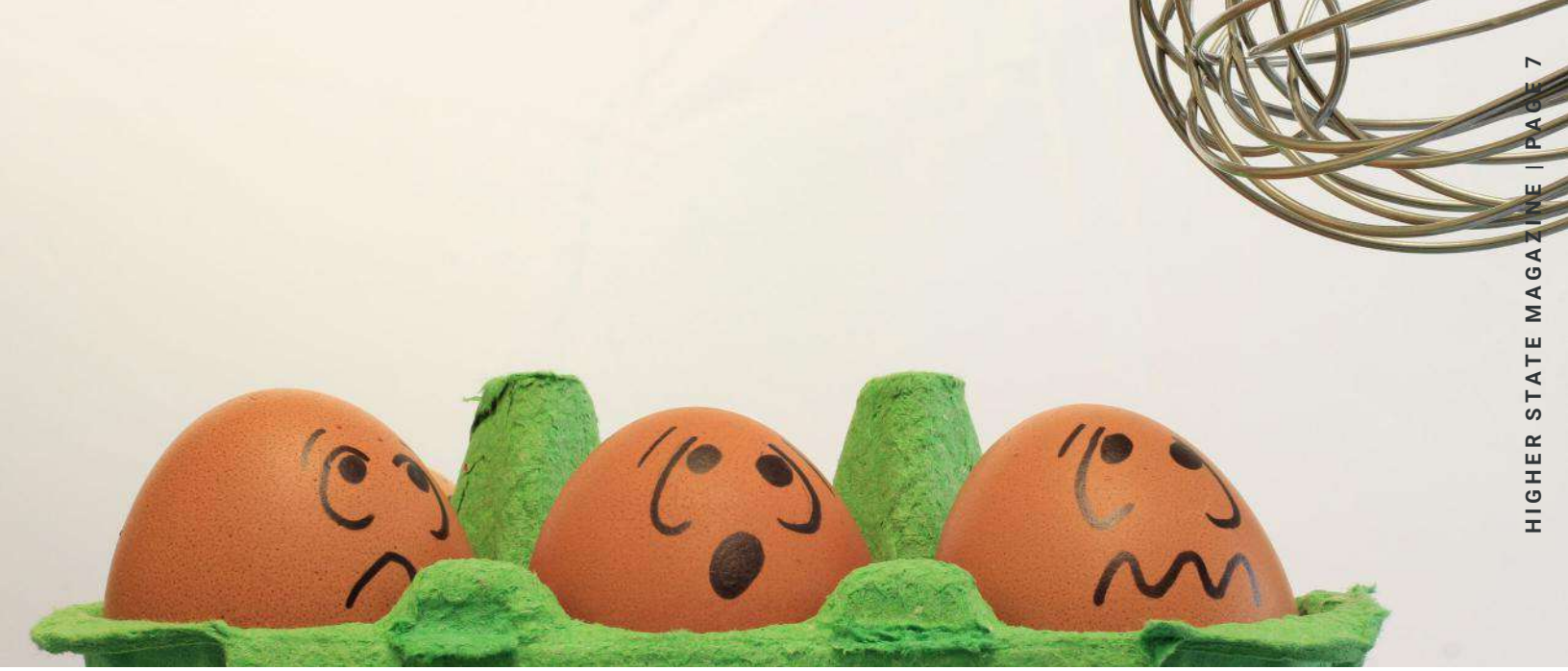
On the other hand, for those meaty "big picture" activities, dedicate certain days or parts of days to fully immerse yourself in strategic thinking and creativity.

Theming is successful because your brain can now quickly shift into gear based on the type of work it is expecting. Over time, neural pathways will deepen and you will be able to get into and get on with your tasks much more quickly and effortlessly.

For example, I tend to assign my less formal meetings, phone calls and admin on Fridays. This gives my brain permission to relax a bit more towards the end of the week (when I do actually want to wind down, ready for the weekend). I associate Mondays with prep and content creation, whilst Tuesdays to Thursdays are typically client-intensive days where I fully immerse myself in that type of activity.

So, what can you do to channel your brain juice more effectively?

If you want to be more productive and achieve more in less time, register for the FREE 10 Day Productivity Challenge that kicks off every Monday. One quick & easy challenge each day for 10 days to help you get on track. Register here and set yourself up for success.



MINDSET: Face Your Fears

Get out of your own way

On the path to success, fear is an inevitable force that can make or break the most determined person. One of the things that high performers do REALLY well is acknowledge their fears and yet continue to move through them.

This doesn't mean being reckless and taking uncalculated risks. Instead, this is about facing these fears head on, doing what you can to mitigate any high risks associated with these fears, and then continuing on with your mission.

For most of us, the chances are that many of our greatest fears extend back to earlier times in our lives when something was triggered - and in a work context, it is highly likely that our fears are externally created rather than stemming from something truly inside us. For example, some of the biggest fears holding people back from growing into themselves are the fears of failing and, ultimately, worrying about what other people think. The irony here is that no one else really cares! If you try and fail, people may pay attention to that for a short period of time. However, they will quickly move on because they have their own fears to face and mountains to climb. Likewise, you will learn from anything that doesn't go quite right - and, believe me, this learning will set you up for even greater success in the future.

So take all the opportunities you can to stretch yourself, be scared and then keep going with that fear clinging around your ankles. Volunteer for that project, apply for that job and say yes to that presentation! None of us like being out of our comfort zones but, the more you do it, the more you'll enjoy the rush that goes with it. Your zone will continue to expand with you. As one of my favourite quotes goes, "What seems impossible will one day be your warm up."

If you want to develop a high performance mindset and shake off any blocks / limiting beliefs that prevent you from bringing your best self to work, get in touch about our workshops and coaching programmes for both individuals and teams.

FITNESS: The 10,000 Steps Debate

Do gadgets help or hinder the cause?

Recently, I was asked by **Metro News** to comment on a range of fitness gadgets designed to encourage movement when we have limited time or opportunity. It's fantastic that people are starting to sit up and recognise just how important exercise is to overall health, energy levels, concentration, confidence and - ultimately - overall performance and productivity. Therefore, any way we can incorporate more physical activity into our days gets a big thumbs up from me.

One area I often have mixed views on is the value of gadgets that track steps and the potential false sense of achievement that may come with these. So many people own a step counting device and proudly announce that they have taken 10,000 steps in a day. What's interesting is that this "goal" was never set on scientific grounds - instead, it dates back to a Japanese advertising campaign from the 1960s. Of course, taking 10,000 steps is better than no steps, but it's important not to fall into complacency. What's even MORE important is the need to get the blood pumping, get the heart rate up and have a little bit of intensity when you work out. This is what will make you feel, look and perform better on a physical level.

So, instead of relying on tech to tell you if you've done enough movement, why not see how your body feels, looks and responds? That will give you the best indication as to whether you're on the right track or whether you need to STEP it up ;)

Abigail is a qualified Master Personal Trainer, certified Precision Nutrition coach and Pilates Instructor. She integrates Physiology into client performance strategies and workshops. To find out just how much physical wellbeing impacts workplace performance, email ask@abigailireland.com.

Get 5 Quick, Easy & Delicious Recipes
>> CLICK HERE <<

NUTRITION: Why your brain loves fat

Feed your brain the food it needs for top performance

Not so long ago, consuming fat was considered a real no-no for anyone who took their health seriously. However, study upon study is proving that having the right mix of saturated and unsaturated fats in the diet is crucial for healthy cell function and development.

In fact, the brain LOVES fat and is itself nearly 60% comprised of this substance! Our brain cell membranes need essential fatty acids (EFAs) to ensure fluidity and thus enable important nutrients to travel in or out.

And, as all high performers know, enabling top brain function is essential if we want to be our happiest, most productive and accomplished selves.

EFAs are not synthesised by the human body and so we need to find these in our diets. The key is to opt for high quality, healthy fats such as those in Omega 3 rich foods including sardines, mackerel, flax seeds, chia seeds and walnuts.

Studies have also shown that consuming monounsaturated fats (for example, olive oil) leads to improved cognitive scores. On the other hand, "bad" fats have a detrimental impact on brain health, leading to poorer memory and cognition over time.

So, the key is to incorporate a variety of fats into your meals, but to ensure these come from good quality sources and are weighted more heavily in the direction of unsaturated over saturated options. Finally, saturated fats should come from real food sources (think coconut oil, organic butter, grass-fed meat) rather than heavily processed foods.

For daily support with your fitness and nutrition goals, and to boost your mental and physical performance this year, check out the One Year Online Nutrition & Fitness Coaching Programme with Abigail Ireland here.

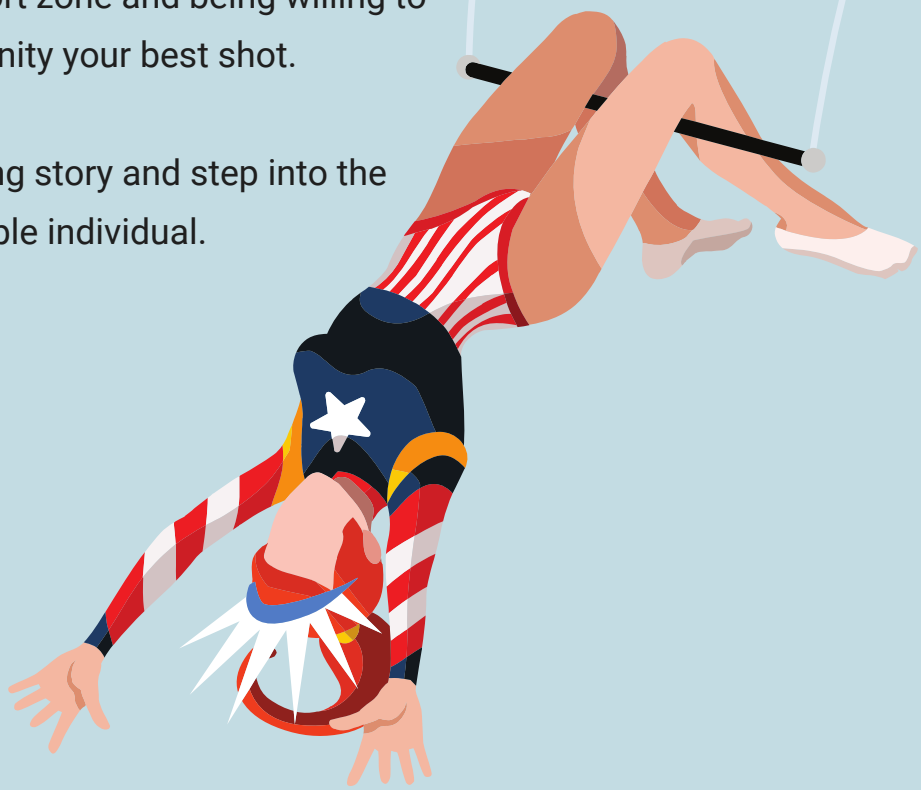
For a FREE Recipes for Busy People Mini E-Book, click here.

FLYING HIGH AND JUGGLING IT ALL

Being talented in diverse fields is a rare thing, but you couldn't really find something more unique than a high achiever who combines a background in competitive ice skating on a national scale, practising law AND performing in the circus all over the world.

Zoe Baldock is an aerialist, juggler, former junior British Champion ice skater and ex-lawyer who shows us the fascinating world of high performance through a different lens. The parallels between the circus and the business world are hugely significant - when it comes to the power of teamwork, trust, leadership, stepping out of one's comfort zone and being willing to give every opportunity your best shot.

Read Zoe's amazing story and step into the mind of an incredible individual.



"THE ONLY WAY YOU'RE GOING TO FAIL IS IF YOU DON'T TRY."

ZOE BALDOCK

Zoe Baldock is a phenomenal human being. From an early age, she showed the signs of a high performer - dedicating herself to being the best she could be in the world of ice skating and subsequently dominating in this field. Moving on, she proved she had what it took to become both a high-flying lawyer and an international circus star.

Mastery in more than one field is a common trait of high performers. For example, Arnold Schwarzenegger dominated the property, bodybuilding, acting and political scenes - all very different and yet he excelled in each. Likewise, Zoe has proved she can excel in whatever she turns her attention to.

Abi's Observation: When I first met Zoe, I wasn't prepared for her incredible story and achievements. Zoe is extremely humble and down to earth - and yet, she has accomplished more in the last 20 years than most would achieve in an entire lifetime - winning in sport, academia, a corporate career and international circus life. Her unique background proves that anything is possible if you are willing to go beyond your doubts and fears, to keep practising and keep an eye on the ball (literally!).

Key Takeaway: Often, the greatest adventures and biggest growth opportunities in life come from simply having the courage to say yes to challenges and embrace them head on - whilst also doing your best to prepare for them.

INTRODUCING ZOE

You have a very eclectic career path – what are your key milestones?

I guess it depends which career you're talking about! I suppose the milestone that my competitive skating career, my legal career and my touring career all have in common is that I ended them, out of choice and on my own terms. I had achieved what I wanted from them and it was time to move on, which is a pretty significant milestone.

In my current career, I've almost made it through my first year of running a business. I'm watching my students challenge themselves and inspire each other every day, which is a joy to experience.

Tell us more about your ice-skating career and how you become a British Champion skater?

The route to gold will be different for everyone, but in my case it was persistence. I was a fairly average ice skater when I started, certainly not a standout talent. But there was a real sense of community at the ice rink, and I enjoyed the camaraderie of the training sessions, so I spent a lot of time there.

I'd been skating for eight years before I started creeping up the ranks, and I won my first national title at the age of 13. But I found the top end of the competitive circuit a very different experience to the recreational end. It was an eye-opener for me in terms of how we define success and what really makes us happy.

What drew you to the circus and how did you decide to leave law?

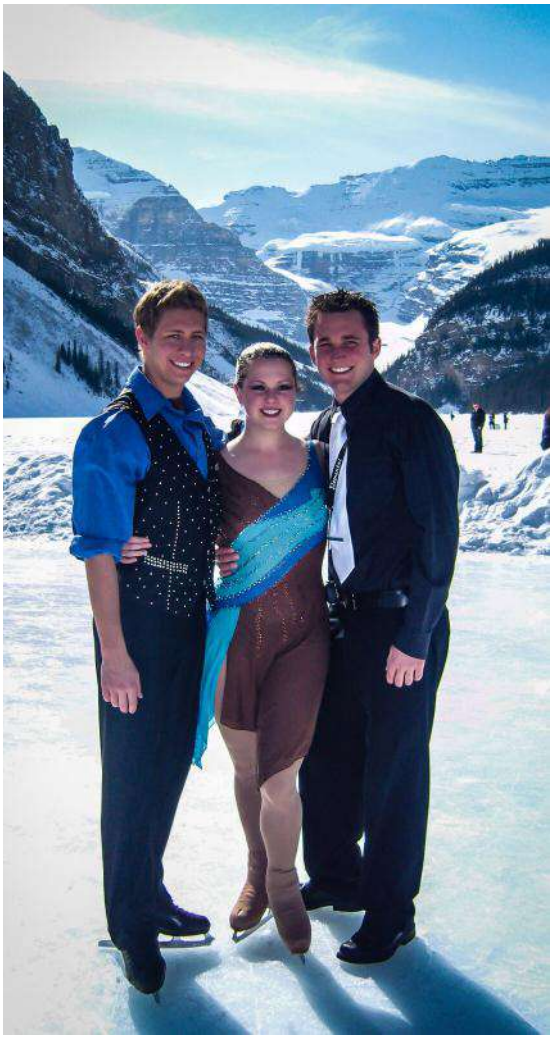
To begin with I wasn't drawn to the circus as much as I was drawn to the adventure it involved. I was looking for a way to travel on a shoestring after four years at university, and a Samoan circus happened to be looking for an ice skater. The opportunity thoroughly captured my imagination, but the destination was key. I'm not sure I'd have felt as excited by an offer to join a circus in Europe at that point in my life.

When I left my legal career in London several years later, again, it wasn't the circus itself that drew me back in. I was disillusioned with life in the office for a number of reasons, and I recognised that I might be happier if I took a chance and made a change. So when an opportunity came along, I took it. I'd never been to India before, and I'd never ringmastered a circus before. Why not give it a go?

In the end I fell in love with circus for the way it constantly allowed me to challenge and reinvent myself. No matter how long you've been in the industry, there is always something new you can try. A new discipline, a new trick, a new style. It might work for you, it might not… but that's not what matters. Along the way, you'll meet like-minded people. Those who train in circus skills, whether professionally or recreationally, learn not to limit themselves through their thoughts. And that can make for some pretty interesting experiences.

What are your key learnings from circus life?

Circus has certainly given me a new respect for the laws of physics. When I'm teaching, I find myself talking about scientific principles that I remember from school… and complained would never be of any use to me in real life! There's a lot of creativity in circus, but understanding the science behind it can help you to push the boundaries safely.



"Never assume that just because that is the way something has always been done, that must be the best way to do it."

Aside from acting as secondary science lessons, circus has taught me a lot that has had a far wider application. I like to tell my students that lessons for circus are lessons for life! Here are just a few of them:

1. Take responsibility for yourself. Never assume that just because that is the way something has always been done, that must be the best way to do it. Sometimes, in circus, your life will depend on your willingness to logic something out and challenge the status quo.

2. The only way you're going to fail is if you don't try.

"Those who train in circus skills, whether professionally or recreationally, learn not to limit themselves through their thoughts."

If you do try something, and it doesn't turn out how you wanted or expected it to, that is not a failure. It's experience. Laugh about it if you can. Cry about it if you need to. But find a way to make peace with how it turned out this time. Even if you don't realise it, you will have developed yourself physically, emotionally, or intellectually, just from the fact that you tried.

3. Others will see value in things you don't, and vice versa. It often won't be the case that one of you is wrong.

4. Remember to look back at where you've come from as well as forward to where you want to be. You're a work in progress, and you always will be. Celebrate that.

5. Attitude matters. If you can't behave with respect and dignity, then people aren't going to enjoy being around you. That's going to close doors for you, no matter how great you are.

What challenges have you faced and how did you overcome them?

Injuries can feel like a huge setback to a performer. Aside from the physical pain, it can affect your job security, which can have a knock-on effect on your sense of

worth. Injuries can also be very isolating; you tend to get separated from the pack when you're rehabilitating. If not physically, then emotionally.

I always try to find a way to take control of the challenges I'm facing. If a goal seems unattainable then I'll break it down and take one step at a time. I find it quite empowering to remind myself that I can give up if I want to. I'm not saying I will, but knowing that I'm choosing to face this challenge in pursuit of a goal puts me in a much better place psychologically than if I feel backed into a corner. Feeling helpless is what makes a challenge feel insurmountable.

Ultimately, whatever it is you're facing (unless it's an apocalyptic disaster), the world will keep on turning whether you get the outcome you wanted or not. Time will pass and there will be better days. Remembering this always helps me through tough times. Sometimes there will be

disappointment to deal with. Or frustration. Or grief. Whether you got the outcome you wanted or not, it's important to give yourself time to recover from the big challenges you've faced. But then find a way to move forward from the experience in a positive way. Success is an attitude, not an outcome.

Did you have any mentors or coaches along the way?

Everyone you meet has the potential to change the way you think, whether they're trying to or not. Through the years there have been people I've turned to for advice. But there have been many more who have influenced me by example. Perhaps without knowing they had done so. And perhaps in ways you wouldn't expect.

I think it's important to take responsibility for your own growth; it's up to you to pay attention to the lessons around you and work out whether and how you can apply them to your own life.

Circus stunts are often risky and beyond the capabilities of the average person – how did you overcome any fears and reach such a high level of performance?

People often talk about having the courage to face your fears, but knowledge should come first. Courage without knowledge can add up to recklessness.

Whenever I've considered trying something risky, whether it's a new circus trick, starting a business, or accepting a job offer from a stranger on the other side of the world, the first thing I will do is research. Once you've done your research on something, you'll get a gut feel for whether it still seems like a good idea. As long as you're not ignoring the facts, you should listen to that instinct.

Can things still go wrong? Always. Doing your research doesn't make you clairvoyant. But how will you know what could happen if you don't try?

If you've measured up the risk vs potential reward vs potential consequences, you can decide whether it's a risk that's worth taking.

Once you've made an informed decision that something is worth doing, that's where courage comes in. It's not always easy to step outside of what's comfortable and familiar.

When I'm struggling with fear, I try to remind myself of why I want to achieve this particular thing. It focuses my mind on reward rather than consequence. If you've dealt with the knowledge part properly then you can afford to do that.

It's worth mentioning that I think it's ok to not be pushing your limits all of the time, as long as you don't feel you're missing out on something you'd like to have. What's important is that we work out which of our own buttons we need to push to make us feel alive. And then arm ourselves with the knowledge and tools to hit the switch.

"When I'm struggling with fear, I try to remind myself of why I want to achieve this particular thing. It focuses my mind on reward rather than consequence."

Your line of work often involves a high level of team work and trust – what's the key to high performance?

Communication and honesty. There's no point in having a great idea if you can't communicate it effectively, and hiding anything can lead to mistakes of all kinds.

It's important that people feel they can be honest. Honest about whether they really understand something or not, honest about if they're not feeling 100% today, honest about what their capabilities are.

Failure to disclose things like that to your team is not stoic or admirable. A team can't resolve a problem they don't know exists.

"Attitude matters. If you can't behave with respect and dignity, then people aren't going to enjoy being around you." ZOE BALDOCK

What are your top three personal values when it comes to work and life?

Value yourself, but with humility. That goes hand in hand with valuing others, too.

Do things that matter to you. Work out what drives you right now, and then find a way to incorporate those things into your life. Reassess from time to time. You're allowed to change your mind. Just because you once felt it, doesn't mean it's still true.

Be kind. Always. It costs nothing, and if you practise kindness properly and for long enough then it will give you a sense of peace that you'll never get from having the last word or putting someone down.

Can circus skills help to enhance performance in the workplace?

The all-round benefits of physical fitness are well-documented; people who exercise are generally happier, and happier people make for a more productive workforce. But the benefits of circus skills go beyond just making you fitter.

We often tell our students that circus is a workout for the brain as well as for the body. Numerous studies have pointed

towards the benefits of learning new skills, and people often tell us they've heard that juggling makes your brain bigger. Which is true, in a fashion… but it's not the juggling per se that's doing it; it's the acquisition of the new skill.

So learning to basic three-ball juggle, and then performing that exact skill for a few minutes every day, is not how you'll get the maximum benefit from juggling. What maintains that growth is continuing to learn new skills, and adding to your repertoire. The beauty of recreational circus is that there is always another trick to learn, so you'll never run out of ways to train your brain.

"...circus is a workout for the brain as well as for the body."

Aside from that, there's also the social and team building side of circus. Our classes and workshops encourage people to get to know each other and capitalise on each team member's strengths. We see some beautiful examples of students supporting and helping each other, and we find that the circus environment allows people to flourish in unexpected ways.

To out more about Zoe and CirqueScape, visit:

https://cirquescape.com

And **click here** to watch another impressive video showcasing Zoe's skills.

Get in touch to learn more about the superstars we speak with in Higher State.

To boost your performance, enrol on one of our upcoming Performance Programmes.

>> CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS <<

"DECIDING WHAT NOT TO DO IS AS IMPORTANT AS DECIDING WHAT TO DO."

STEVE JOBS

CLICK HERE for future PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMES

Thank you for reading Higher State! Stay tuned for Issue 12, out in November 2019.

I respond to all emails personally so drop me a note and let me know what you want to read about.

In the meantime, stay productive and bring your A-Game EVERY day.

Abi

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