ISSUE 12
JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2021

HIGHER STATE

THE MAGAZINE FOR HIGH PERFORMERS

SINK OR SWIM

Champion swimmer Claire Cashmore shares the ingredients of a winning mindset

LOCKDOWN MOTIVATION

Tactics to stay consistent with exercise

IMMUNITY FUEL

The buzz word of 2020 and beyond - staying strong from the inside out

THE POWER OF ONE WORD

The secret behind a focused and intentional year

DRAW THE LINE

Be proactive and intentional about your time this year

Reboot in order

Wow, what a crazy 12 months it has been! I spent the first couple of months of 2020 travelling all over Europe for work, and by March I was ready to just be in one place for a while. Little did I know what I was wishing for!

It's been a really tough year for everyone, in so many different ways, but I really want to encourage you to think about what you've learned over this period. We can wait for things to go back to "normal", whatever that may mean in the future, or we can observe ourselves through this surreal experience and reflect on how we are handling it and what we are learning about ourselves.

One thing I've learned over the years, not just in 2020, is that life isn't easy or logical. It isn't fair and it isn't predictable. For these reasons, it's important to take it into your own hands to give every day your best shot - because, at the end of the day, that's all we can do.

This month, you'll LOVE my interview with the amazing Claire Cashmore. Read on and enjoy!

Abi

Transforming People. Transforming Performance

Issue 12, January / February 2021

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 peak performance habits** and achieve results with more energy, more focus and less stress - on a sustainable and healthy basis.

Our unique **P.E.A.K. 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.

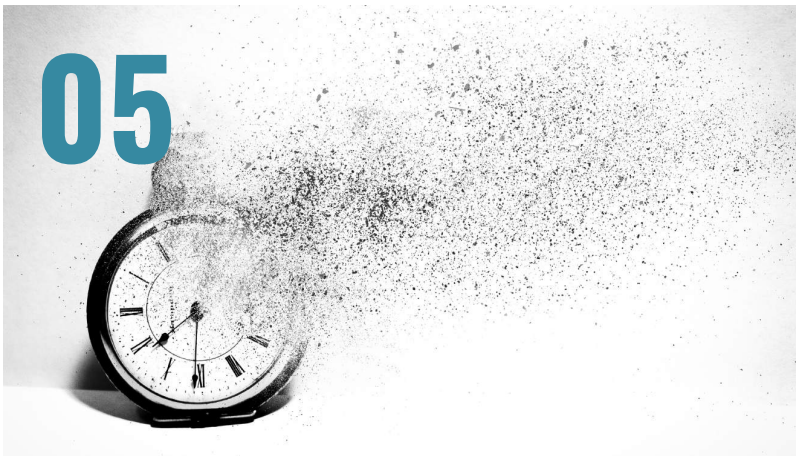
Combining extensive business and coaching experience with skills as a certified fitness, mindset and nutrition professional, Abi can help you to take your team to the next level.

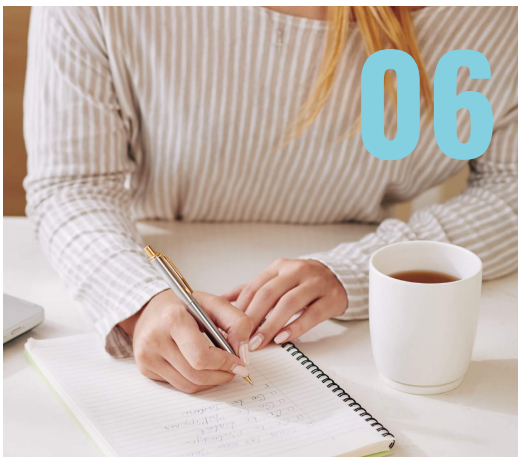
Speak to Abi about team **training**, executive performance **coaching**, **consultancy** and in-house **programme development**.

Abigail Ireland - Peak Performance Strategist

www.abigailireland.com
abi@abigailireland.com

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 a decade. She went on to launch her own businesses in the wellbeing and education fields, using her additional skills as an accredited Executive Coach, 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 **P.E.A.K. Performance Formula** can be applied to any team to boost productivity, energy, focus, engagement and results.

1 WORKSHOPS

- Practical, value-packed workshops and programmes designed to amplify performance and create powerful habits.
- Workshops on topics including Energy Management, Personal Effectiveness, Thriving at Work, Team Dynamics, Performance Mindset, and more. Also tailored programmes 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 <<

PRODUCTIVITY: Take charge of your time

Remember, no one's going to do this for you

We often talk about time as something that is entirely out of our control. Something we can't change (true) and something that we never have enough of.

Let's take a step back here.

For as long as we've been alive, we've had to interact with this thing called 'time'. We learned to tell the time, we've had schedules since nursery school, and we are well-versed in the importance of time in managing meetings, interviews, deadlines and occasions.

So, despite our ongoing and never-ending focus on time, why is it that so many of us still struggle with it? Surely we'd have mastered it by now?

The truth is that we are too focused on *quantity* instead of *quality*. We think we need more time when really we need to do less, or do things more effectively.

Example - 60 seconds can go in the blink of an eye, but it seems to last *forever* when you are holding the plank pose or doing burpees. Likewise, it's easy to be 5 minutes late to a meeting (and possibly hold up other attendees too), but being 5 minutes late to board a flight would mean 'game over' for your holiday (not that anyone is planning those right now!).

If we treat time as a precious resource, we're much more likely to use it well and appreciate every moment. If we take more ownership of our priorities and how we actually spend our time, we'll experience greater productivity and satisfaction in our days. What do you think?

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: Using affirmations

Pick a word, but not just any word

It may sound ridiculous or overly simple, but one word can make a huge difference to your outlook and ability to achieve your objectives in a given day, week, month or year. Many highly successful people create intentional focus by choosing a word or phrase that can be used as a self-affirmation.

So, what is an affirmation?

Well, you may be familiar with affirmations being associated with mindfulness and meditation practices. The dictionary definition is, "a definite or public statement that something is true or that you support something strongly". And through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), studies have revealed that practising self-affirmation activates the reward centres of the brain - especially if set in the future tense. Essentially, affirmations support energy, focus, motivation and a positive state of mind.

A common affirmation people may repeat to themselves could be, "I've got this" or "I can do this". You've probably seen this in movies when the protagonist looks in the mirror and gives themselves a pep talk.

Despite the "woo woo" status of affirmations, this is definitely a concept that is becoming more mainstream. In fact, affirmations sit neatly alongside visualisation exercises, which are used by some of the world's greatest athletes, performers and entrepreneurs. At the end of the day, the language we use with others and the words we tell ourselves have an impact on how our brain organises itself.

Consider the words you use and change your script. After all, if it really is just "woo woo", what's the harm in giving it go?

To develop a winning performance mindset and shake off limiting beliefs that prevent you from bringing your best self to work, get in touch about our workshops and coaching programmes.

FITNESS: Stay Fit Through Covid-19

The gyms are shut but we can still move

It has been a tricky few months for the gym goers amongst us (at least here in the UK), given the constant closing and opening and re-closing of gyms and fitness studios all over the world. However, the silver lining has been the availability of so many high quality apps and portals to stay active from our living rooms. If you're still struggling to fit exercise into your days, whether that's because you're juggling a 101 different things or simply lacking the motivation, here are two top tips to get moving again. It's a new year, so shake off the old excuses and take a step forward...and then another!

Tactic #1: Break It Down

This works if you can't find the dedicated time for a workout in the morning, evening or other time of day. Simply carve out 10 minute intervals in between tasks to move a little bit. Remember to warm up first and then spend a few minutes doing cardio such as skipping or burpees (start gently!), 10 minutes later on in the day on ab work, 10 minutes later still to focus on squats and lunges. Target different body parts at each interval so you can feel the burn. Every little counts so be consistent.

Tactic #2: Reframe Housework

All that cleaning and tidying up can fall under the umbrella of working out. Be more intentional as you do your weekly chores, by thinking about the muscles you're using and how you carry yourself. Whether vacuuming, sweeping, scrubbing or doing the gardening....all of these activities are excellent to keep the heart rate up and work those underused muscles.

Which of these options works for you? No excuses, give it a try!

Abigail is a qualified Master Personal Trainer, certified Precision Nutrition coach and Pilates Instructor. She integrates Physiology into performance strategies and workshops. To find out more about the impact of physical wellbeing on workplace performance, get in touch.

NUTRITION: Supporting immune health

Boost immunity and energise your system

The first *Reboot the System* programme of 2021 is now underway, with the goal to supercharge energy levels over a two month period.

When the first programme launched back in March 2020, we were in a different world. Who knew how significant this would become?!

Now, more than ever, the importance of good physical health is evident. Nourishing our bodies is being talked about on an amplified scale as we seek to boost our immunity.

The good news is that a strong immune system and our energy levels go hand in hand, supporting each other. If we strengthen and look after our bodies, we'll feel better and have more energy.

As we start a new year, we thought we'd share three of our favourite immunity boosting foods. Instead of reaching for the pills and potions, try good old-fashioned whole foods such fresh vegetables to keep you going and optimise nutrient intake.

Citrus Fruit
Vitamin C is the OG when it comes to immune health, with antioxidant properties and a role to play in white blood cell development. Keep a bowl of fruit in sight and grab a kiwi or clementine as an after meal snack.

Broccoli
Love it or hate it, broccoli is your friend through the darker days. Brimming with nutrients including vitamins A, C and E, broccoli really is ACE! Sorry, had to do that. The sulforaphane in broccoli supports our immune response, whilst studies also reference the compound 3,3'-diindolylmethane. This is associated with higher levels of cytokines in the blood, that help to regulate immune system cells.

Live Yoghurt
Talk about probiotics is becoming increasingly popular. A healthy gut is closely connected to immune system health and so it pays to boost this as much as we can.

To join the waiting list for the next *Reboot the System* 60-day online programme, click here

JUMPING IN AT THE DEEP END

Success can often breed a lack of humility but my guest star in this edition of *Higher State* is one of the most humble and down-to-earth people I've ever encountered - even more impressive given that she is a World Champion, Paralympic Swimming Champion, a Gold Medal winner, World Record holder, winner of countless awards in swimming and triathlon events, and has been appointed a MBE.

Claire Cashmore is a force to be reckoned with. She has learned a lot of lessons throughout her life, all of which have shaped her path and helped her to be the resilient and determined athlete she is today.

So let's dive in and learn more from Claire.

"I WAS A SMALL GIRL WITH QUITE A BIG DREAM"

CLAIRE CASHMORE

Claire Cashmore is a winner, in her line of work and in the way she approaches life. Whilst it can be easy to make excuses, give up when the going gets tough or take the easy way out, Claire continues to trailblaze her way through life and not let anything get in her way.

Of course, there have been challenges and setbacks along the way, but Claire's powerful mindset has helped her to overcome these and rise even stronger.

In this conversation piece with Claire, it was fascinating to dig deeper into the mental game and understand just how significant this is for success - whether you're a professional athlete or a corporate warrior.

Abi's Observation: Speaking with Claire was really humbling. She is such a high performer that I was in awe of how much she has achieved in her young life, and I was impressed by her focus and vision. Claire's idea of an "ok" outcome would be anyone else's greatest achievement in life, so it was so fascinating speaking with someone who operates at such a high level and sets this as her standard.

Key Takeaway: We often underestimate the grit, determination, focus and sacrifice that is required to achieve outstanding results. We also neglect the power of our mindset, which can make or break us. Claire's insights show how important all of these factors are for success, whatever the situation.

INTRODUCING
CLAIRE

How did you get started with your athletic career?

When I was five years old, we moved to Dubai - and obviously you're surrounded by water. So for me, it was quite an essential skill to learn to swim and I actually hated it. I was absolutely petrified of the water, which sounds quite ironic now. When summer began, my mum and my dad said I really needed to learn how to swim because there was water everywhere and it was “just too dangerous to not be able to have our eyes on you all the time if you're still not able to swim”. And so my parents kept pushing me slowly into the pool, not literally pushing me but encouraging me to get in! And then, before I knew it, I absolutely loved it!

I was a water baby and I couldn't get enough. I was constantly in and out of the pool. I just wanted to jump in and jump out, and keep splashing around. And so that was where it started. When I got a little bit older, I learned about the Games and, at quite a young age, I realised that I wanted to become a gold medalist. I was a small girl with quite a big dream.

When we moved back to England, I realised I really missed swimming and I wanted to carry on. I joined a local club and, just by complete chance, I managed to get involved in disability swimming and went to my first Nationals. I did fairly well and it just went from there. I went to my first round of the Games at the age of 16 - which was just completely unexpected - and that was the start of my professional career. And now I'm still here.

You’ve clearly had a passion for swimming since an early age, but what is it about swimming that ticked the boxes for you?

As I loved sport as a kid, I suppose swimming was the one that I showed some talent in. I also enjoyed running and I was quite a good runner. At age 14, I had to make a choice and decide whether to go down the swimming or athletics route. I couldn’t do them both. At that point I made the decision to kind of focus wholeheartedly on this domain. I do love the freedom swimming gives you and I love that you can just push your body to absolute extremes. You feel the pain but also the satisfaction.

It sounds really odd to a lot of people to want to feel that pain, but it's that satisfaction that you get afterwards when you know you've given absolutely everything.

I think it's about knowing your limits and knowing how far you can push your body, because I think we always *think* that we're giving absolutely everything...but then somebody will come up beside you and you always have that little bit extra to push on and compete against them.

So you can ask, "What is it about that person being there has given me that extra level?" I think it's about understanding your body and knowing how you can get to that red line and push past it.

You've had a really successful career, and won several medals over the years. What obstacles would you say you faced and how did you overcome these?

A journey wouldn't be a journey without those obstacles, and those are kind of the key learnings that often define your career. For me, my biggest obstacle was probably being afraid to fail. That became really obvious in Beijing and my second Paralympic Games. I went in ranked #1 in the world and suddenly there was this new girl on the start list that I'd never seen before. Before leading up to the Games, I had put all my eggs into one basket. I'd given up absolutely everything - I didn't go to university, I'd stopped going out with friends and family, and I'd got very focused on swimming. I didn't do extracurricular stuff because swimming was my focus.

In Beijing, this new girl threw a complete spanner in the works. It wasn't within my plan for her to be there because I was going to win that gold medal. In breaststroke, the only time you see anyone is when they are going past you. I suddenly saw this girl go past me and I completely lost it. I thought I was strong and I was resilient, but all I could focus on was her and why she was going past me. I didn't have a clue what I was doing in that race.

"I think we always think that we're giving absolutely everything...but then somebody will come up beside you and you always have that little bit extra to push on and compete against them."

"Failure isn't a bad thing - it pushes you out of your comfort zone when you've tried something and it hasn't worked. As long as you learn from it, then actually, it can be a really fantastic thing in a really weird way."

I got to the end and finished third, which at the time seemed like the biggest failure in the world. I was absolutely distraught. That was horrible. I felt like I'd let everybody down...all those people that had invested in me.

In hindsight, it was the best thing to happen to me because I learned so much about myself in that period. I realised that I was so focused on that gold medal, that I actually didn't know the process to get there and what it was going to take to get to that gold medal. The experience changed the way my brain functions.

I still struggle with that now. When something like this happens, you realise how much your brain is involved and how much is your body. I was super fit but I lost my head, so I ended up going backwards rather than forwards. It's important to just think about the little goals you can control and not just focus on external factors.

Failure isn't a bad thing - it pushes you out of your comfort zone when you've tried something and it hasn't worked. As long as you learn from it, then actually, it can be a really fantastic thing in a really weird way. It is hard...it's not a nice thing to deal with but it's essential in a successful career.

What do you think about when competing?

In swimming, because it's such a short race, I literally don't know. Everything just flows when you're in the zone and going for it. You're not thinking too hard and not worrying - just present and in the moment, and everything is happening the way it should.

After getting out, I'd think, "Where'd that come from?" It just all comes together because you've done it day in and day out. You've done the exact same movement before, you've prepared for it.

If you get distracted, all the energy is going towards all those different things rather than 100% towards swimming. In triathlons, I'm thinking and aware of the surroundings. It's very much a tactical race and it's an hour long, so it's a completely different ballgame.

And what about right before the race when you're on that start line and about to jump in the water or start your triathlons. What's going through your head then?

I'm thinking I'm going to be sick?!

Even people who are professional athletes get those nerves. I think people get this to a certain level in the corporate world when doing presentations and other things. Is it nerves or excitement - that feeling in your stomach like you get when you're on a roller coaster? And is that going to help or hinder you on your journey?

I definitely get that before a race. I try to bring myself back to the present and calm myself down. I need the nerves but I also need that state of readiness. For me, it shows that I'm ready to perform so I quite like it. It's about being in control.

I use techniques like deep breathing to calm myself down. I think positive thoughts and have a few mantras.

Try not to let that negative side of your brain hijack you and tell you all the things that you're not good at, because that's what it loves to do. It's in a state of fear. It wants to tell you you're no good. You're going to be rubbish. It's about staying positive, staying calm, breathing.

Would you say you're a naturally positive person?

I think I'm definitely positive but also a worrier. I worry about absolutely everything, but I'm definitely more on the positive side of things. Even with little things like the weather being rubbish, I'm like, "Don't worry, it's gonna be fine. The sun's gonna come out."

I'm probably more negative about myself. I beat myself up for what I personally do, but I think on

a whole I try to be positive around other people. I've realised that a happy athlete makes a fast athlete.

It's probably the same in the corporate world. You're far more effective if you're happy in your life. It's so important to have that work life balance, and often it's hard to get that because you want everything - you want to be the best at your job and you want to impress everybody around you. But actually, you do need to think about yourself and the values that are important to you.

"Try not to let that negative side of your brain hijack and tell you all the things that you're not good at, because that's what it loves to do. It's in a state of fear. It wants to tell you you're no good. You're going to be rubbish. It's about staying positive, staying calm, breathing."

How do you stay calm under pressure nowadays? What have you learned over the years that's helped you to manage your stress these days?

I've done a lot of work with my sports psychologist and I'm doing quite a lot of mindfulness. I know my signs of stress and I can then manage those, as I know when it's happening.

I think the biggest thing is almost that awareness of how you change in slightly stressful situations. I know I get a bit more irrational and really sensitive. I start overthinking and worrying about things that are not yet an issue. Now, I notice these signs so I know that I need to take the pressure off myself, calm down, and go do some mindfulness and meditation. That really helps bring me back to the present.

I think it's being aware of your stressors, being aware of how your behaviour changes, and

"You're far more effective if you're happy in your life. It's so important to have that work life balance..." CLAIRE CASHMORE

then you can deal with it. When you're not aware and completely oblivious to it all, it becomes an issue and the bucket fills and completely overspills. Awareness is key for me.

What else do you do to de-stress?

The thing most people go to is exercise, whilst this is my work! Ironically, it does always make me feel better still. Also listening to music, chatting to friends... going back to my values and working out what makes me happy, and just making sure that those things are not being neglected. And so those are the other ways that I take pressure off.

You mention your values. What would you say your top three values are in life?

Family, friends and balance. Balance of the training load and making sure that I'm not overstressing or getting too obsessed. The three almost tie in together.

I think that's really healthy because it keeps you grounded and makes you realise what else is out there. It's also because when you're going for the medal or trying to get your PB, you train on your own. So it's quite nice to have people around you those other times and have that balance.

What or who were the most impactful things / people on your journey?

I've had a very, very mixed bag of coaches throughout my career. I've had absolutely brilliant top coaches who have supported me and brought the best out in me by always pushing me in a supportive way. I've had other coaches that haven't really done that at all.

I've learned from that and I've realised that it doesn't work for me to have somebody constantly criticising me. I need a bit of positive reinforcement.

It's also taught me that you can't rely on other people for that positive reinforcement and you need to get it from within.

"...you can't rely on other people for positive reinforcement...you need to get it from within."

There are always going to be people that tell you you're not good enough and highlight all the things that are wrong with you. If you have that inner confidence and belief in yourself, you shouldn't need that. You should be able to filter that out and know that it's rubbish. I think you can face that imposter syndrome or that inner critic that comes up.

You can look outwardly for that reinforcement no matter what age or where you are in your career - especially in the corporate world. It's really bad that we can't just see it for ourselves. That's probably one of the biggest things in sport - you are almost pretty much always getting that instant feedback, but it's not always like that.

"...that mindset piece is probably one of the most important things that can power people on in their careers."

So how do you know yourself that you're doing a good job?

Having that inner confidence to actually know that you're good enough without anyone having to give that to you...I think it's really powerful and that mindset piece is probably one of the most important things that can power people on in their careers. It's actually having that belief in yourself.

You've got an MBE and numerous medals and accomplishments. Can you just tell us a little bit about the MBE and how that come about?

This was not long after Rio and it was amazing. I never ever expected it and so it was incredible. It was a really amazing experience to go to Buckingham Palace. You're surrounded by so many amazing people and you almost feel like you don't actually deserve it at all.

"I think it's important to remember where you came from and never get above yourself because we're all the same at the end of the day."

Your humility really shines through and you're so down to earth.

I think it's important to remember where you came from and never get above yourself because we're all the same at the end of the day. Everyone's achieved amazing things in their own way. I hope to stay grounded, so it means a lot to hear that - so thank you.

What's keeping you busy at the moment and how can people find out about you?

So, with Tokyo being postponed for a year, I am still training full time and also finding lots of little projects to do on the side. I've been doing quite a lot of charity work and I'm also in the process of writing a book. That's in the pipeline at the moment and I'm really passionate about it. It's about normalising disability, particularly with kids. I think we need to have more role models out there in the media, in literature, in all sorts of areas. We need to break that taboo and just be able to have conversations so it becomes normal.

To out more about Claire, visit:

https://clairecashmore.com

@ClaireCashmore
clairecashmore1

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 <<

"YOU HAVE POWER OVER YOUR MIND, NOT OUTSIDE EVENTS. REALISE THIS, AND YOU WILL FIND STRENGTH."

MARCUS AURELIUS

CLICK HERE for future PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMES

Thank you for reading Higher State! Stay tuned for Issue 13, out in March 2021.

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

FOLLOW ME ON:

abi@abigailireland.com
www.abigailireland.com