

3 Keys to Becoming an Elite Athlete

(Family Features)

When it comes to becoming an elite athlete, there are differing opinions on what it takes to win gold.

Sports analysts and commentators often reference sprint times, body weight, height or age as differentiating factors, but Dr. Steven Stein, CEO of Multi-Health Systems and emotional intelligence expert, has a different idea.

Emotional intelligence is a set of emotional and social skills that influence the way people perceive and express themselves, develop and maintain social relationships, cope with challenges and use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way.

Using The Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0 model to test emotional intelligence, Multi-Health Systems found athletes around the world often score high in self-regard: the ability to know their strengths and weaknesses; self-actualization: doing what they love and continually trying to improve; and flexibility: their ability to learn, change and take direction.

Self-Regard

Self-regard is the ability of an athlete to know his or her strengths and weaknesses. For elite athletes, it can also translate into confidence.

“Confidence, as part of self-regard, can be a key differentiator among medal winners,” Stein said. “At the highest level of many sports you have a number of athletes with near-equal skills and talent. Often, having the right mental toughness can make that millisecond or single point difference among judges.”

Self-Actualization

Self-actualization reflects comfort with who you are and what you are doing. For example, competition at the international level takes years of preparation and practice, and may require personal, social and familial sacrifices.

“Self-actualization allows an athlete to continue to learn and improve, as many athletes start out with a vision that helps define their passion,” Stein said. “For example, you frequently hear stories of athletes who come from challenging childhoods - deaths of parents, early injuries or difficulties with school - who commit fully to their sports, find success and go on to become role models for others in both athletics and overcoming adversity.”



Flexibility

Flexibility is a person's ability to change and take direction, and for an elite athlete, it means learning from a bad performance instead of getting frustrated. It is one of the better predictors of the ability to be coached and succeed, and Multi-Health Systems found that it is especially important in both professional and amateur athletes.

“Sometimes, high-level draft picks in various sports who have difficulty taking instruction don't make it as professional players,” Stein said. “Great athletes are often great learners, and when athletes think they already know what's best or don't listen to coaching, it can derail their performance.”

Learn more about emotional intelligence and the role the mental side plays in becoming an elite athlete at mhs.com.

Photo courtesy of Getty Images
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Source: Multi-Health Systems

Comfort Food Made Quick and Easy

(Family Features)

A steaming bowl of savory soup is the perfect comfort food when the wind is howling, rain is falling or the temperature is dropping. It's a time to cozy up and enjoy the warmth of being inside while indulging in some of your favorite flavors.

The rich, hearty tastes and textures of a soup result from the seasonings, spices and melding of different ingredients while it slowly simmers to perfection. However, when there's no time for lots of prep and cooking, there are shortcuts that don't sacrifice taste.

For example, when time is short, a can of READ Southwestern Bean Salad gives you a head start. The robust mixture of black beans, corn, hominy and kidney beans in a slightly spicy, chili-lime accented tomato sauce is just right in recipes that boast Tex-Mex flavors like this Chicken Enchilada Soup. Just add a few pantry staples and some sauteed chicken for a warming pot of soup in about half an hour.

For more quick and easy recipes for the season, visit readsalads.com.

Chicken Enchilada Soup

Recipe courtesy of Dinner, Dishes and Desserts on behalf of READ Salads
Servings: 6

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 pound chicken breast cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can (10 ounces) enchilada sauce
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken stock
- 1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes with green chilis
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) READ Southwestern Bean Salad
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste



- crispy tortilla strips (optional)
- shredded cheddar cheese (optional)
- diced avocado (optional)

In large saucepan or Dutch oven, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add chicken and onion. Cook 5-6 minutes, or until chicken is browned and onions are soft, stirring occasionally. Add garlic; cook 1 minute, until fragrant.

Stir in enchilada sauce, chicken stock, tomatoes and bean salad. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve with tortilla strips, cheese and avocado, if desired.