

STAY ON THE TRACK ...

Keep off the penalty lap!



I was recently listening to an inspiring CD and the speaker used a really interesting and powerful analogy. As he was watching the winter olympics his attention was drawn to the event called the 'Biathlon'. I had never heard of it so I will try to explain as I understand it. If I get it slightly wrong, please forgive me. The most important thing about this event is the ability of the competitors to 'stay on the track'.

Being a biathlon there are obviously two aspects to the event. The first is that the competitors need to ski really fast around a set track and then at a certain point on the track they need to stop at a shooting range and take 5 shots, in 5 different positions, with a rifle to hit a really small target. If they hit all five targets then they set off on the track again. After completing several laps the first competitor across the line wins the event. It sounds pretty simple, but there is an interesting complication – if a competitor misses a target with any of their shots, then they have to move off the track and complete a penalty lap, which takes about 30 seconds. For every one of the 5 shots they miss, they have to complete one penalty lap. So potentially they could have to do 5 penalty laps. This event is a balance between skiing fast and shooting with precision.

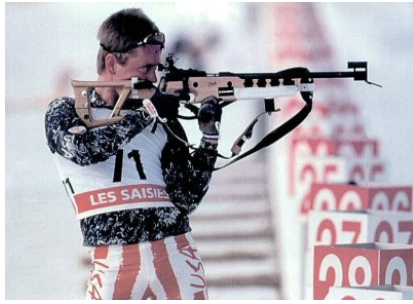
Avoid the penalty lap!

As we can plainly see the penalty lap is off the set track and any time spent on that lap will take the competitor off the track and out of the race for a period of time. This is not where competitors want to be and so taking the shot is crucial, even if they have to slow down the skiing a little, to make sure they don't miss. This offers a great analogy for our lives.



In our lives and in the pursuit of achieving our goals, unless we stayed focused, we will be taken off the success track and may find ourselves on the penalty lap of life. Whilst we are on the penalty lap we can never get to the finish line - we can never achieve our goal. The secret is to do whatever we can do to **stay on the track and stay in the race and avoid the penalty lap!**

What can put us on a penalty lap?



In the pursuit of our goals and a better life, if we know what will 'put us on a penalty lap' then it will be easier for us to make better decisions. In so doing we can avoid those things that will take us off the track to achieving our goals. The speaker on the CD mentioned 8 things that will put us on a penalty lap and so I would love to share those with you;

Eight things that will put us on a penalty lap;

1. **Lack of mind control and a slipping attitude** – If we have trouble focusing on what we want, if we are regularly negatively affected by undesirable circumstances and if we are quick to give up responsibility and blame others then we put ourselves on a penalty lap!
2. **Avoiding uncomfortable tasks** – It has been said that 'everything we want is outside of our comfort zone; being fitter & healthier, having better relationships, greater career success and any personal achievement. If we avoid the things we need to do because they are not comfortable then we put ourselves firmly on a penalty lap!
3. **Negative emotions** – We have the ability to control our emotions by the meaning we give things that happen to us. If we allow our thinking to create negative emotions such as; jealousy, guilt, anger, frustration, blame and wallowing in self pity it will well and truly put and keep us on the penalty lap!
4. **Shortcuts** – Why is that we are always trying to avoid the process to create long term change? Why do we look for a quick fix or an easy option when the way to success is to take the time, make the changes and do what it takes? Deep down we know this and so the shortcut will only take us to the penalty lap!
5. **Inconsistency** – We tend to only be on task and doing the right things when we are motivated. The problem with this strategy is that we can never be motivated all the time – so the key is to do what needs to be done consistently, irrespective of how we feel or how motivated we are. Inconsistency will put us on the penalty lap!
6. **Weak or no goal** – With no goal we have no real focus. With no goal we have nothing really drawing us to a successful outcome. Having a weak or no goal means we will be going round and round in circles; around the penalty lap!
7. **Working without a coach** – When we have clarity and a burning desire to achieve what we want, we will be drawn to someone who has walked the path before us and can lead us to success. Without this direction we will find ourselves in 'no man's land' and on the penalty lap!
8. **Listening to ignorant people** – This is a big one! If we take any notice of people who don't know what they are talking about, who don't have a vested interest in our success and/or who may be jealous or envious of us, we will find ourselves on and unable to get off the penalty lap!

Stay on the track!!

It is only when we are on the track that we are in the race. It is only when we are in the race that we can ever win. We need to be aware of what can take us onto the penalty lap and do what ever we need to do to **stay on the track!**

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