

We're talking to
Lucy Charles-Barclay

The new Ironman World Champion and Red Bull athlete talks to us about maintaining a positive mindset and using visualisation to reach your full potential

Has your wellbeing been impacted by your profession?

'Being a professional athlete is an emotional rollercoaster. Winning my first world title in 2021 was the highlight of my career, but I've sustained quite a few injuries since then. It can be mentally hard to trust your body after injury, but returning to win the Ironman World Champs - while setting a new course record and being the first woman to lead from start to finish - is testament to the self-love I've been showing myself to keep going and never give up.'

How do you deal with setbacks?

'When you're told you can't train anymore due to injury, it can be difficult not to spiral into a negative state because your whole livelihood feels like it's over. Recently, I've heard a lot of athletes say it's crucial not to let your self-worth become attached to your career, and while it's hard not to let the two become intertwined, I think I've started to learn how to be happy with who I am, for who I am, and not attach that to winning titles.'

How do you prepare mentally before a competition?

'Mental prep is almost more important than physical training, especially for an event as long as an Ironman, when I'm racing for eight or nine hours. Maintaining a good headspace for the entire duration is vital,



so when I'm training, I visualise how I'm going to feel at certain points, or I'll think about the self-talk I'll need to give myself if I'm struggling. I pushed myself harder than ever before for the Ironman World Champs because no amount of physical pain would have been worse than not winning that title after coming second four times. I just had to endure the pain knowing that the reward would come at the end.'

What do you wish more women knew about mental wellbeing?

'I think, as women, we are incredibly tough on ourselves. I always have really high expectations of myself, and I can be very hard on myself when I don't achieve my goals, but I'm trying to be kinder to myself, too. I suggest setting goals that are hard but not completely impossible. Equally, don't set goals that are too easy, otherwise you won't get a sense of satisfaction when you finally

check that box. Reflecting on your journey and recognising how far you've come is also a really important thing to do.'

What gives you a boost?

'Going out for a run clears my mind. It's doesn't have to be hard: a gentle run is always enough to get some endorphins flowing, and doing just a little bit of movement tends to boost my mood'.

What does balance look like to you?

'When I'm in a training camp, my balance will be off because I'm all in to try to win. But when I have a great result, I will go out and celebrate with my friends and family. I like to have that balance of saying, "you did the work, now you're going to be rewarded for it".'

To find out more about Lucy, head to her Red Bull athlete page at [redbull.com/gb-en/athlete/lucy-charles-barclay](https://www.redbull.com/gb-en/athlete/lucy-charles-barclay)