

### 3 Lessons Sport Taught Me



**Egon Schiele Fiori stilizzati, 1908**

My mother took me to the rhythmic gymnastics center when I was four years old. No coach wanted to enroll me because I lacked physical characteristics and performance. The fourth center accepted me only because they felt sorry for my mom, who seemed to be almost desperate.

They told her that I'd only be fit and healthy as a maximum result, but there's no point in waiting for big competition victories. From the very beginning, I wanted to convince both my coach and my mom that I could compete—it became my goal. I spent hours after the rest of the group's training was finished, using hand-made ankle weights with steel inserts borrowed from my father's fishing kit, to make my movements more light and fluid. To cut a long story short, I joined a city's competitive team.

So, the first and foremost lesson that the sport taught me was to stick to your goal and to be consistent in following it. Someone will always be there to discourage by telling you are not

good enough or comparing you to others. The point is that the social comparison ceiling is so high that almost no one will ever reach it. Discipline and self-motivation will be your ally.

"Life is a struggle and the potential for failure is ever present, but those who live in fear of failure, or hardship, or embarrassment will never achieve their potential. Without pushing your limits, without occasionally sliding down the rope headfirst, without daring greatly, you will never know what is truly possible in your life." – Admiral William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed*.

The second lesson: it's not always going as it was supposed to. Sometimes the unintended consequences of actions beyond your control can be far more serious than those you take consciously. You have to give yourself room for error (margin of safety) and apply your cognitive flexibility. That's why the strategy for reaching your goal needs to be tracked and adjusted timely.

"Planning is important, but the most important part of every plan is to plan on the plan not going according to plan."— Morgan Housel, *The Psychology of Money*.

Despite the setbacks along the way, stay positive – the third one. Pessimism lowers hopes, reducing the distance between potential results and results you're happy with. There's no space for gloom and doom in our lives. Your competitor is getting better, whereas you are losing time on complaints and sadness.

"The cornucopia that greets you as you enter the supermarket dwarfs anything that Louis XIV ever experienced (and it is probably less likely to contain salmonella)." – Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist*.

I'm no longer a gymnast. My dad passed away a long time ago. I still have those hand-made ankle weights with steel inserts borrowed from his fishing kit as a reminder of self-motivation and strong will.