



TRAIN LIKE STORM

ATHLETE CASE STUDY | EILEEN GU LEARNING, TRAINING & TRUSTING YOURSELF



Gold medalist China's Eileen Gu poses with her medals after winning the women's freestyle skiing halfpipe final at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Livigno, Italy, Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026. (AP Photo/Abbie Parr)

What can a freestyle skier teach you about becoming a better netballer? Probably more than you might think.

Eileen Gu competes in a sport that looks very different from netball. She is an Olympic champion freestyle skier and one of the most successful athletes in her sport, but this case study isn't really about her medals.

In interviews, Gu has spoken openly about how she approaches learning, training and competition. She talks about being curious, continually looking for ways to improve and knowing when to stop analysing and trust the work she's already done. Some of her ideas connect closely with what you've already explored in your Positive Mindset & Confidence resources, while others give us something new to think about.



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Learning As A Superpower

One of the ideas Gu talks about is learning as a superpower. She describes being curious about how things work, analysing what she's doing, and continually looking for opportunities to learn and improve.

This connects with neuroplasticity, which describes your brain's ability to change and adapt in response to learning and experience. When you're developing a skill, your brain is learning from your attempts. Practice, feedback, mistakes and adjustments can all provide information that helps you learn.

This is one of the reasons purposeful practice matters. Rather than simply completing repetitions, you can pay attention to what you're trying to improve, what happened during an attempt, what you could adjust and what is starting to feel different or more consistent.

A mistake doesn't have to mean "*I'm bad at this.*" It can give you information about what to work on next. You can make an adjustment, try again and continue learning.

Your brain can adapt as you learn.

Train Like You've Never Won, Compete Like You've Never Lost

One of Gu's most memorable descriptions of her approach is:

"I train like I've never won, and I compete like I've never lost."

At training, Gu describes herself as analytical. Even after achieving enormous success, she continues looking closely at what she's doing, identifying where she can improve and being willing to make changes.



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There is an important distinction here. Being critical of your training doesn't mean being critical of yourself. Training gives you a place to be curious, ask questions, make mistakes, use feedback, make adjustments and try again. Identifying something that needs work doesn't have to become a judgement about your ability as an athlete.

When it's time to compete, Gu describes making a mental shift. Instead of continuing to analyse and question everything she's doing, she focuses on trusting the preparation she's already completed.

That idea can apply to netball too. At training, there will be times when you need to think carefully about your technique, try something differently, ask questions and work through mistakes. During competition, there will also be moments when you need to stop analysing, make a decision and play.

Training is where you question, learn and improve. Competition is where you can begin to trust the work you've done.

Evidence Over Affirmation

Gu also talks about "*evidence over affirmation*", which should sound familiar after exploring Build The Evidence in Documents 1 and 2.

Her approach provides an interesting example of an elite athlete using a similar idea. When it's time to compete, she draws confidence from knowing what she has already done to prepare.

BUILD THE EVIDENCE → THEN GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO TRUST IT.



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Visualising In 4D

Gu also describes using extremely detailed visualisation when learning and preparing for freestyle skiing. She mentally rehearses rotations, body position and how a trick will unfold before physically attempting it.

She describes this as 4D visualisation, thinking through the movement in great detail and from different perspectives. It's an interesting example of just how specific an athlete can make mental rehearsal to the demands of their own sport.

More Than Your Performance

Another idea Gu has spoken about is separating her identity from her achievements and her sport.

Netball might be a really important part of your life. You might care deeply about how you perform, the teams you're selected in and the goals you're working towards. Those things can matter to you without becoming the entire measure of who you are.

A difficult performance doesn't suddenly change your value as a person, just as one great performance doesn't need to define you either. You can care about becoming the best athlete you can be while recognising that there is more to you than what happens on a netball court. You are more than your last performance.

What Can We Learn From Other Athletes?

Eileen Gu's approach won't necessarily be right for every athlete, and that's not the point of this case study. Listening to athletes from different sports can expose you to different ways of thinking about learning, preparation and competition.



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You don't need to copy everything another athlete does or agree with everything they say. You can listen to their experiences, consider their ideas and decide what, if anything, might be useful for your own development.

The goal isn't to train like Eileen Gu. It's to keep learning what helps you train and compete like you.

Recommended Viewing

If this case study has interested you, hearing Eileen Gu explain these ideas herself is a great way to explore them further.

On Purpose With Jay Shetty | Eileen Gu: "The Ground Was Cracking Beneath Me"

In this 2026 interview, Gu talks about learning, training and competition, as well as neuroplasticity, evidence over affirmation, visualisation and separating her identity from her achievements.

If you don't want to watch the full interview, some particularly relevant sections are:

- 26:29 – Learning As A Superpower
- 31:22 – Train Like You've Never Won
- 36:06 – Separating Your Identity From Your Craft
- 41:34 – Evidence Over Affirmation
- 43:34 – The Physics And 4D Visualization Of Freeskiing



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Eileen Gu | 2026 Winter Olympics Press Conference

You can also watch Gu speaking during the 2026 Winter Olympics to hear more from her in a competition environment.

Both videos are recommended viewing only. You don't need to take notes or complete an activity while you watch. Simply listen to what Gu has to say and consider whether there is anything in her experiences or approach that could be useful in the way you learn, train, prepare or compete.

Research & Further Reading

Research into neuroplasticity and motor learning supports the understanding that the brain can adapt in response to learning and experience, including the processes involved in developing sporting skills.

Gu's comments throughout this case study represent her personal experiences and approach as an athlete. They are included as a case study rather than as scientific evidence or a set of rules every athlete should follow.

Biochemical Pathways of Neuroplasticity in Sport Skill Acquisition: From Neuroscience to Coaching Practice. (2026).

Gu, E. (2026). Interview on *On Purpose with Jay Shetty*, 31 August 2026.