

Metadata: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UJkFtVUWOo>

Many people, I think, when they think of competition, they tend to think of it as an extraordinary event. I've got my training here, which is ordinary, every day, and then there's the stage, which is extraordinary, which stands outside of what I normally do. My whole emphasis is that there's no difference. And so, as the competition gets closer, I remind them more and more that what they do on the stage is exactly what they do here in the basement every single day. I don't hype fighters. I don't say, you know, this is it, this is your big chance, you're on the stage now. I go the exact opposite route. For me, it's about normalization. These kids do something twice a day, sometimes three times a day, every day. What they do on the stage is identical. There's something which I often talk about to them, the parable of the plank. It's a little long. Is it something you'd be interested in hearing? Yeah, absolutely. When I was a child, growing up in New Zealand, we grew up in a very rural area, and it was charming, but somewhat rustic and primitive. And one day, we were all around five to seven years old. Teachers came to us at the small school, and they said, a visitor has come, and you're going to watch him. He's a daredevil. Now, daredevil meant stuntman. He was a stuntman. Now, you must remember, this is 1970s New Zealand countryside. Of course, he wasn't much of a stuntman. He was very much an enthusiastic amateur. He was actually from Australia. And he came in, and he performed stunts for us. Now, we're like 30 kids. The whole high school was like 30 kids, and we were watching. Now, to us, this guy was a god, absolute god. He put on a glove and set his hand on fire. We were just like, oh, my god. His hand's on fire. We couldn't believe it. He threw a boomerang and caught it. We were just like, wow. It boggled our minds. So we went through a series of stunts. He fell downstairs, and we just thought, oh, my god, incredible. This guy can fall downstairs, and he's fine. So he was like an amateur stuntman. And for his final trick, he went to the two buildings of our school. Now, those buildings were very small. They were two stories. But to us, they were like New York skyscrapers. He put a plank between the two buildings, and he walked across the plank once, twice, three times. And we just couldn't believe it. To us, it was like a guy who walked between the Twin Towers. He put a line across and famously couldn't have been any better. We just were howling. We couldn't believe it. It was incredible. But at the end, he came down with his plank, and he put the plank on the ground, and he asked us all to run across it. And we all did. And it was easy. And then he looked at us, and he said something I never forgot. He said, the plank is the same. I put it up higher. And so it took your breath away. But you guys just ran across the plank. The plank didn't change. Your perceptions of it did. And he's right. That's the difference between the gym and the stage. There is no difference. The plank doesn't change. Only your perceptions change. That's the emphasis that I put on my athletes. It's the same thing you do every day. Everything else you see, the lights, the people, that's all an illusion. Don't get distracted by it. It's so easy to buy into it. Because, of course, the promoters want you to believe that. The crowd wants you. This is extraordinary. This is the biggest show of the year. They want you to believe that it's different, that it's extraordinary. And from the promoter's perspective, that makes perfect sense. But not from the athlete's perspective. The athlete has to go 100% the opposite way. And see the smoke, the music, the lights, the strangers' faces. That's the illusion. The reality is a man, a referee, and a man across the stage. And so everything I do is just to focus on that. That's how you take an emerging athlete and get them from the gym to the stage with the minimum interference. I haven't had anyone have a notable failure where they crashed on the stage. I've had people give performances that I believe they held back from what they were capable of, but that's normal. That's part of development. You see this even at the highest levels. But I've never had someone just crash. Even though it does happen occasionally.