

MAKING THE CASE FOR YOURSELF

This exercise comes from the *Compete Training Journal* by Lauren Fleshman & Roisin McGettinigan-Dumas. Even if all your mental preparation is going according to plan, it's easy for negative thoughts to quickly seep in and spiral out of control. Pre-race jitters can turn into negative self-talk, which can upend our race before it even begins.

CONFRONT NEGATIVITY

Negative chatter is normal. This part of the exercise is about getting all of it out in the open. Start by writing down all the negative things you tell yourself before or during competitions. Yes, even include the ones you're too embarrassed to admit.

BUILD YOUR CASE

Now pretend you are a lawyer and you must make a case for yourself. Your job is to make a list of counter-arguments for each of the items you listed above. Beside every negative you wrote down, list all the positives you can think of. These can be something that you currently believe sometimes, or something you want to believe about yourself in the future. If you're having a hard time, it may be easier to think that you're defending someone else – say a best friend.

Now go back and circle the top 3-5 negative comments and your counter-arguments. These are the ones that will come up time and time again. Practice memorizing your counter-arguments. Your mind may flip back to the negative at first, but keep coming back to your counter-arguments. And remember, the mind can only think of 1 thing at a time, so keep coming back to the positive.