

# Meet Sara the Sports Shrink

**S**ara is a familiar face on television, popping up to give a view on documentaries or asking the Nation "How normal are you?" She has been involved in assessing the driving skills of "New Zealand's Worst Drivers" and more recently, given us some hints on how to child-proof our homes on "My House My Castle". We have heard her voice on The Edge, Radio station, as she provided the moderating influence when complete strangers readied themselves to take the plunge in 'Three strangers and a Wedding'.....but by far her most interesting role, is as the psychologist that battles it out with Murray Deaker and Willy Lose on Radio Sport and Tim Giles on Radio B Sport.

As a Registered Psychologist, Sara Chatwin has carved out an interesting niche for herself as the mentor behind many of New Zealand's elite individual and team athletes and several sports people overseas. Yet, by Sara's own admission, her springboard into sports psychology came "as a bit of a surprise". Having completed a Bachelors degree and a Masters First Class Honours degree, Sara decided to do a sports Psychology certificate for fun! She found soon after that it was fortuitous timing as several high profile sports people turned up at her busy Auckland private practice, after being referred by relatives and friends.

"I guess it was a baptism by fire. Of course psychology has been stigmatised in the past....but fortunately many people are smart enough to overlook what others think and get help and a new perspective when they need it!"

For Sara, it is just as important for sports people to be able to talk about other aspects of their life, as well as their sport. Many pure sports psychologists are focused on training regimes and fitness programs, but Sara firmly believes that success in most sporting disciplines comes from viewing the athlete as a whole.

"An athlete in a tumultuous relationship, for example, can be recipe for performance disaster. I think that when your dealing with sports people, particularly those that reach the elite level in their sport, there are so many things you have to consider...even down to educating them to deal with media scrutiny!"

As a staunch supporter of the Peter Snell Institute, a group that identifies and supports youth athletes, Sara believes that it's essential to fund groups like this to ensure that New Zealand's great sporting tradition is continued. However, unlike her experience of sporting agencies overseas that have no problem with funding and staffing, Sara is often disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm and the funding struggle that our athletes and sports groups have.

"I often marvel at just how well our sports people do given the limited resources they have. We do also have the situation where sporting agencies work competitively, not co-operatively.....which is a different situation from models abroad."

However, Sara is one person committed to helping athletes and sports people reach their potential and represent their country to keep our sporting pride alive and well.

Sport Unleashed welcomes Sara to the team and looks forward to her contributions in the upcoming issues. ■



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