



Debbie Percy is trained in Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Psych-K, metaphysics and Mindfulness for Coaches

Developing the mental side of your riding is as important as your technical skill and can provide a massive competition advantage. Here are sports psychologist Debbie Percy's top five tips to help make sure you're mentally ready for the challenge of moving up a level.

BE CONSISTENT

Many of us are tempted to try something new just before a competition. If you're prone to confidence drops then don't do this - stick to what you know.

VISUALISE

The power of visualising the performance you want, the feel or even the result you desire, is well proven. Ride your dressage test or over jumps, in your mind, in detail. Do it again and again, both before the show day and on the day itself. If your mind throws in a problem, see yourself dealing with that problem and then carrying on undeterred.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

At show time, there's no point focusing on weak areas, instead focus on your strengths. Create some internal chatter to remind yourself about the three things you do well, such as: "I'm a strong, forward-going rider and can feel how my horse is going."

DIY FEEDBACK

To help develop your feel, without relying on your trainer, arrange for someone to video you rehearsing your dressage test or popping over some fences. Immediately after each filming session, talk into the camera about the ride - what went well and how it felt. When you watch it back, does what you said coincide with what you can see on the video? This is critical for cementing the feel you want into your memory. If you don't seek out the good stuff, you can't expect to know what it is and how to recreate it. Of course, our trainers help reinforce the good stuff too but they won't be with us in the ring, so we have to be self-sufficient.

KNOW YOUR WARM UP

Know what your warm up routine is - have one and practise it. Its role is to set you both up for success. Doing well-rehearsed moves aids relaxation and confidence.

Having a clear training plan will set you up for success

