

What Doping Athletes Can Teach Your Kids About Success

By Dr Justin Coulson

On May 24, 2026, the first [Enhanced Games](#) took place in Las Vegas. The media [controversy](#) surrounding the games was enormous – as was the [hype](#).

According to organisers, the games are ushering in “a new era in athletic competition that embraces scientific advancements to push the boundaries of human performance.” That’s PR-speak for “our athletes are doping to the extreme – and we’re encouraging it.” It’s the Olympics for cheats.

The promise: world records, astonishing performances, and a whole new world of limitless potential.

The reality: a whole lot of drugs. A woeful competitive spectacle. And essentially zero enhancement of anything. Athletes filled their systems with steroids, sold their souls for scraps, and walked away with their reputations in ruins and no records to celebrate.

What does this have to do with parenting?

More than you might think. But first, back to the games for another moment.

I was surprised at the woeful results. The East Germans of the 80s and the Chinese athletes of the 90s doped far more successfully with their illicit doping campaigns.

But then I thought about it a little deeper.

Let’s start with the swimming. One world record was [beaten](#), and it’s likely that this was less to do with banned substances (steroids) and more to do with the super suits that were banned in 2010 that give a boost of +5% to performance.

On the athletics track, results were [shabbier](#) than the failures in the pool. The men’s times were closer to the female world records than any men’s records. And for both male and female athletes, their times were off so much that the athletes were not even in the top 1000 best times this year. There are high-schoolers running faster.

The problem is this: the organisers believed that if they could rope in some of the best athletes in the world and fill them with steroids, they’d become Superman (or Captain America). But that’s not how it works.

It’s true that steroids enhance performance. And so do a range of other things like sauna and cold plunges, magnesium, peptides, and every other fad that’s out there (except for those power-bands people wore around their wrists).

But it’s the cult of optimisation that we – and especially our boys – keep falling for. The quick-fix. The short-cut.

Do you really think the athletes trained as hard for these contests as they did when they were competing – clean – at the Olympics and world championships? Of course not. They only had a handful of months to prepare. And most of them are no longer full-time athletes.

The quick-fix is not real

James Clear is the author of the 20-million-copy bestseller, *Atomic Habits*. In the book, Clear describes an interaction he had with an elite weightlifting coach who visited the gym in which Clear was training - a coach who had worked with thousands of athletes during his long career, including a few Olympians.

Clear asked him: "What's the difference between the best athletes and everyone else? What do the really successful people do that most don't?" The coach mentioned genetics, luck, and talent. He then added the unexpected:

"At some point it comes down to who can handle the boredom of training every day, doing the same lifts over and over and over." According to Clear, "The only way to become excellent is to be endlessly fascinated by doing the same thing over and over. You have to fall in love with boredom."

Every study of astonishing, world-class success, points to the same thing, best outlined by Mary Meagher, a three-time Olympic gold medallist at the 1984 LA Olympics:

"People don't know how ordinary success is."

Everyone wants the secret – the shortcut. We want it. Our kids want it. The hacks fill our feeds. And there are countless grifters who'll sell you the promise of an easy answer to help you feel less insecure, more optimised, and shift you towards your dream. Whether it's us falling for the latest fad or our kids clamouring for clout, human nature drags us into thinking there is a pill, a course, or a solution that gets us "there" faster.

Today Androgenic and Clavicular will tell your son to pump himself full of testosterone, peptides, and toxins to looksmaxx. Andrew Tate, Myron Gaines, and other self-help sewage peddlers will offer shortcuts to wealth and status via their crypto scams, "leadership" programmes, and hustler universities.

The Enhanced Games promised superhuman results through chemical shortcuts. They delivered embarrassment. The real lesson for us and our children is this: the shortcut may or may not get you there faster. But the shortcut will hollow out - or even erase - the only thing that matters: the person you become on the way.

The value is not in the medals, the glory, the likes and shares, or the status. The value is in what ordinary, unglamorous, relentless effort actually produces. That's enhancement worth pursuing.

In *How to Live*, Derek Sivers tells us that

"Mastery is the best goal because the rich can't buy it, the impatient can't rush it, the privileged can't inherit it, and nobody can steal it. You can only earn it through hard work. Mastery is the ultimate status."

When our kids understand that principle, their lives will be harder, but vastly richer.



Dr Justin Coulson is a dad to 6 daughters and grandfather to 1 granddaughter. Justin travels all around the country, speaking at schools to students, educators and parents about wellbeing and relationships. He is also the parenting expert and co-host of Channel Nine's Parental Guidance, and he and his wife host Australia's #1 podcast for parents and family: The Happy Families Podcast. Justin has written 11 books about families and parenting - with the latest about [raising boys](https://happyfamilies.com.au) out now! For further details visit happyfamilies.com.au.