Improve Your Mental Game
With Dr. Jamie Shapiro

Transitions can be tough. This can be especially profound for athletes as they face new levels of competition or the inevitable end of a career. For Chamber member Jamie Shapiro, Ph.D., DU Professor and Consultant at Sport & Performance Excellence Consultants, the experience of transitioning from athlete to coach to university professor was personal.

As a young athlete, Shapiro became interested in psychology during high school and as a club gymnast. Her coach, while not a psychologist, used mental training topics to inspire and better prepare his athletes. This proved to be very useful for Shapiro when she later suffered an ACL injury at Brown University and still managed to recover and return to competition.

Since Brown didn’t offer a sport psychology track, Shapiro formed her own study group, collaborating with fellow students in order to learn more about the subject. “I eventually did my own research and decided this was the right career path for me.” Her athletic transition came when she moved from competitive athlete to coaching and mental training while attending grad school at Springfield College and West Virginia University.

“ Athletic identity can be a big deal. We see it in athletes of all ages and it’s an important topic in the pros when sports figures move toward retirement,” explains Shapiro.

After grad school, Shapiro found her way to Denver where she is an Assistant Professor of Sport and Performance Psychology at the University of Denver.

“My private practice took off because of the connections I made with other professors at DU,” she says. “We all offer something unique which can greatly benefit athletes and performers of all ages.” These connections have led to her involvement with the U.S. Paralympic Team. She recently spent time in Toronto, working with elite athletes at the Parapan Am Games.

“I stayed at the athlete village, roomed with other coaches, and ate at the dining hall,” she laughs. While there, Shapiro realized what an opportunity for “growth and learning” the dorms offered. “The proximity to these dedicated athletes helped me to be a more effective consultant and gave me great insight about how to maintain professional boundaries.”

These are skills that she’s able to impart to her students in order to better prepare them for private or group practice.

In Shapiro’s experience, “In school you train in psychology but they don’t teach you about running a business.” She continues, “The Chamber has really helped me figure that out.” A member since 2011, Shapiro says, “I feel like I’ve made real friends who can relate to what I’m going through.”

One of the most impactful experiences was when she was looking for office space. “Our consultants spend a lot of time on-site working with both teams and individuals.” However, Shapiro found that having a convenient but cost-effective office she could reserve on an hourly basis was essential to business growth. “I wasn’t sure what to do, so I called Sherri! (Sherri Liebhauser, Chamber Program Coordinator) She immediately put me in contact with a fellow member, Boardroom Executive Suites, and problem solved.”

In fact Shapiro’s biggest word of advice to new members is to reach out. “Don’t go it alone, ask for help, call Sherri or come to the events and ask other members for advice. It’s not just about getting new clients; it’s also about the resources we offer one another.”

If you or someone you know is an athlete or performer who would like mental preparation, transition, or injury support, visit Sport & Performance Excellence Consultants at www.speconsultants.com. You can request Dr. Jamie Shapiro by emailing her at jamie@speconsultants.com.