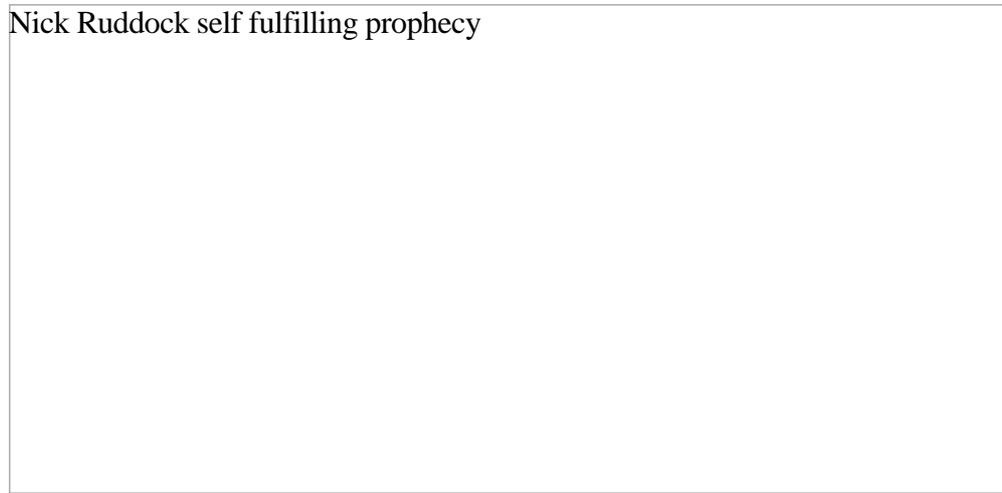


# Self Fulfilling Prophecy

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Nick Ruddock self fulfilling prophecy



It is often told that 'If you tell somebody something enough times, they may just end up believing it.'

That's pretty true too.

I meet new athletes all of the time on my travels, and quite often i'm introduced to them by their coaches.

**Quite often it goes a little bit like this -**

'This is Ella, she's 9 and has the worst legs in the world.'

'This is Caitlin, she's the one I was telling you about who can't jump.'

'This is Sarah, she doesn't like to straighten her legs.'

*You get the gist.*

All of our sudden, the athletes' poorer qualities suddenly become their identity, and I cannot help but wonder what that is doing to their belief system and self esteem.

How many times does an athlete need to be told this before they end up believing it? More importantly, how many times do they need to hear it before they choose to become *powerless* to their weaker qualities, and develop a fixed mindset as opposed to growth mindset?

What can be gained from a 9 year old believing that their legs aren't 'designed' to jump?

We all know that everybody has weaknesses, but we've got to 'frame' these right in the mindset of young athletes. After all, we're teaching life skills as well as sporting performance.

Now on reflection, i've been pretty guilty of this too. Many years ago I had the pleasure of working with a fantastic athlete who but was pretty slow to do just about anything. Going to the bathroom, moving between apparatus, reading her programmes, fetching equipment, all were at snails pace.

I appropriately nicknamed this athlete 'Sloth,' much to my (*former*) amusement. But I now wonder if

that made her even *slower*, and if she's carried that belief in her now adult life.

Young athletes are extremely influential, with coaches playing a huge role in forming the unconscious and subconscious thought patterns and belief systems that will be embedded into their behaviours, thoughts and habits as they go through life. In short, the mind hears more than we think, and it stores that information too for later use.

**What stories have you told of your athletes?**

**What comments have you been told of yourself which have defined your current thoughts, behaviours and habits also?**

Next time you introduce your athletes, how about focusing on their qualities -

'This is Ella, she's working on superhuman legs that will one day allow her to do a Yurchenko double twist.'

Just watch the magic that will do for her self esteem and beliefs.

Food for thought as always.

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