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## **Chapter 5: Terry's Story; Caring through Science and Autonomy**

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### **Abstract**

Terry is an experienced coach who cares for athletes from adolescence through to elite performance and onto retirement. He does so in a dialogical manner that is consistent with Noddings' (2014) maternal notion of care. He is aware that athletes have knowledge and experiences which add value to coach-athlete relationships. With this in mind, Terry encourages athletes to care for themselves by reflecting upon their own development and performances. That said, Terry's caring relationships are 'scaffolded' over time. He provides a lot of direction at the beginning of a relationship and as athletes' progress, he slowly adjusts his language to facilitate more autonomy. This is an original insight that has significant implications for how coaches develop their relationships with athletes.

Terry also uses technology to care for his athletes' health, and for prompting discussion. He therefore couples scientific measurement with nurturing dialogue. This observation is novel and has meaningful connotations for coaching practitioners, educators and researchers. Accordingly, within this chapter, Terry's story is further analysed from both sport science and pedagogical perspectives. These analyses reveal that Terry's care is relational, pedagogical, and dynamic. As a pedagogical aid, implications and questions arising from the multidisciplinary analyses conclude the chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Terry's Story; Caring through Science and Autonomy**

This chapter presents Terry's story. Terry's story builds on the previous chapters by: 1) illustrating how technology and science can be useful mechanisms to facilitate care; and 2) by considering the apparently contradictory notions of care and athlete autonomy. The chapter begins by introducing Terry, his background, and the context in which he coaches. Terry's

story is then presented in his own words (using indented text). The story is structured and narrated around two themes: *Developing a pedagogical relationship*; and *Using technology and science to care*. Following Terry's story, Colum Cronin offers an initial analysis. This is followed by two further analyses. Firstly, Colum further explores the ways in which Terry's pedagogical practice balances athlete autonomy and care. Following Colum's analysis, Kevin Enright discusses the role of the sport scientist in caring for athletes. Kevin provides a practitioner perspective that draws upon his own experience as a sport scientist in top flight English Football (soccer). He considers how data can be both an enabler and barrier to developing and maintaining caring relationships. Both of these analyses add new dimensions to Noddings' (2005) established view of care. The chapter concludes with a summary of take home messages.

### *Introduction to Terry*

Now in his 70s, Terry runs regularly and is often seen in his tracksuit in the city centre. At Starbucks, where I (Colum) meet him, everybody knows Terry. He is a character, but he does not describe himself as such. Rather, he declares that he is an 'old school, classically educated' coach. This description refers to Terry's training at a physical education college, years of practice as a physical educator and drama teacher in secondary (high) schools, and a long and decorated career as an athletics coach. Terry has now retired from teaching but he still works as a coach mentor for a national governing body. Alongside this role and his previous role as a teacher, Terry also coaches athletes (14 years upwards) in sprint events. Some of Terry's athletes have performed and won medals at the highest levels of international competition, including The Olympic Games. Even today, Terry has athletes participating in major international events, for example The European Championships.

Terry may have retired from PE teaching, but in terms of coaching, educating, and athletics, he is a 'lifer'. This is easy to recognise from the way in which he describes himself, his philosophy and his practice. It is also obvious that Terry cares for young people's development. He has high expectations, tolerates 'no nonsense', and challenges athletes to grow. He is passionate about his sport (athletics) and passionate about learning. As a former PE teacher, Terry is also one of those coaches who believes in covering more than a curriculum in order to give 'life lessons' through sport. I imagine Terry would get you fit for a race. At the same time, I believe Terry would take every opportunity to offer timely nuggets of advice such as remembering to "shake hands firmly" in order to make good impression at a job interview. In many ways, Terry is the personification of that philosophy of coaching,

which is underpinned by the belief that coaching is about educating individuals for challenges to come:

You educate athletes to independently cope, and bring them up in a way so that they can do without the coach. Having said that, an athlete occasionally needs a pair of eyes to watch, or a sounding board. But to perform extremely well an athlete has to understand what they do and why they do it. The athlete has to be in control of what they do and I say to athletes; “It is your responsibility, you have to develop, take ownership, and evaluate. And I have to educate”.

In the beginning, you are in more of a teacher pupil relationship, and then once the athletes reach that sort of late teens age, the parents don't come down quite so often to watch the athletes train. They do not see the transition in relationship but athletes that start young with me are brought up to know and appreciate their own knowledge.

My role as a coach is to educate, to bring the athlete to a stage where they no longer need me. I constantly encourage a dialogue and I am constantly encouraging the athlete to understand why we do what we do. I tell the athletes, “I have to justify everything to you. Ask me! If I can't justify it, then don't do it.”

### *Biography*

Terry came into coaching in his early twenties as a result of frustration with his own coach. Terry recognised that his coach was both a good coach and a good person, but that he lacked the requisite technical knowledge for Terry's specific individual event. In response, Terry began self-coaching by planning his own sessions and evaluating his performances, yet he recognised that if he was going to improve, he needed other athletes around to challenge him. His solution was to include and coach a small group of athletes in his personal training sessions. One day, when Terry was in his late twenties, one of these athletes beat Terry in a national championship final. At that point, Terry realised that he might be a better coach than an athlete! This was a turning point, and Terry focused on coaching from that point forward.

In addition, to his coaching experiences, Terry also trained at a P.E teaching college, in “the good old days” when P.E. courses were very practical. He credits this training with providing great technical knowledge, and he believes that his years spent teaching P.E. and drama honed his pedagogical knowledge, developed the skills of reflective practice, and informed his “coaches' eye”;

I can honestly say being a PE teacher is a big advantage. When I was a PE teacher I planned every day. I looked at people perform right in front of my eyes. I developed a coach's eye. I reflected on how well they are doing as they were doing it. I had five lessons a day. There were five coaching sessions a day where I honed my art as a person that gives instructions based upon what I saw. It is an advantage to be a PE

teacher because you are honing your art five times a day before you do a coaching session in the evening.

### *Context*

When coaching, Terry places great importance on building one-to-one relationships and athlete centred approaches. At the same time, Terry recognises that much can be gained from having a vibrant training group; so, each year he works with a small group (6-16) of athletes on the track, in the gym, and off the track. The athletes are of a good standard and they have ambitions for success at national and international levels. These athletes range in age from 14 through to adult performers and include both male and female competitors. This means that Terry's athletes are often on different competitive programmes, and Terry has to find ways to work with the group as a whole, while also considering the needs of individual athletes.

All of Terry's athletes exist within what Côté and Gilbert (2009) define as the performance domain of sport. The performance domain is characterised by an "intensive commitment to a preparation program for competition and a planned attempt to influence performance variables" (Côté and Gilbert, 2009, p.314). Performance coaches such as Terry, spend substantial amounts of time with athletes (Fraser-Thomas and Côté, 2009) and have specific training and performance goals in mind (Côté, et al., 2007). For a small number of athletes within the group, Terry also works with their managers, medical staff and national governing body performance programmes. These athletes have reached the highest international levels

Terry has been a volunteer coach throughout his coaching career; for example, he worked as a teacher on weekdays while spending evenings and weekends coaching. This is typical of coaching athletics in the UK where full-time coaching positions have not been the norm. This is not to say that Terry is anything other than wholly 'professional'; rather it simply means that he is not paid for coaching (Taylor & Garratt, 2010). Similarly, Terry's voluntary status does not mean he is not committed to athletes. On the contrary, Terry takes a long-term view of coaching and is willing to commit to an athlete for their entire career.

I have to be careful who I take on as a coach because it is not for a year or two it is for ten or twenty years. I have to be really careful. I have taken on two more athletes in September. It was a tough decision. Will I be around in ten years? One of the athletes was a more straightforward decision because that athlete is fairly mature anyway and probably only has three years left in his career. But, the other athlete is younger and it's ok, but I do wonder "will I still be around for her?" To be honest, I will probably

be coaching in some form until I die. I would think that I would carry on until I die really.

### *Terry's Caring Relationships*

When I (Colum) began interviewing Terry, it was immediately obvious that he was an educator. Perhaps influenced by his teaching background, Terry emphasised learning, explanation and development during our interviews. Terry does not profess a didactic or oneway form of communication. On the contrary, he argues for a mature pedagogical relationship, where participants have a voice and are not helpless.

You have to spend the time and explain to the athlete exactly why they are doing what they are doing. Once they understand that, then I think they buy into it better, and it just enables you to stand back a little bit and let them make decisions. It means they are far more empowered when they go out and compete. It also means you do not have to be there on competition day. They should be self-sufficient to be able to go to a competition, warm up, and compete on their own. Athletes should not keep looking to the stands for reinforcement from the coach. It annoys me so intensely. It is particularly obvious with field eventers. As soon as the athlete has landed in the jumping pit, or has released the throwing implement, their eyes dart to the stands to see the coach, to find out what happened. I think, well, you should think about that jump, reflect on it, and know what happened, without your coach.

One of the truisms of coaching is that the athlete cannot see what the coach can and the coach cannot feel what the athlete can. You see, I've never run anywhere the kind of speed that my athletes do. There is a difference in the feel and the way in which you distribute your speed when you run forty-seven seconds for a four hundred, compared with forty-four seconds to a four hundred. This means that coaches will often use the language of the eye, but athletes will use language of feelings and should be able to interpret their feelings. Over the course of the season, I gradually change my language to respond to this. At the start, when I am in a teaching mode it will be based upon what I see. By the end, it will be about how they feel. This is important because if there is disconnect between the athlete and coach, it is often because language is too visual and not about feeling and reflections. I encourage reflection from the athlete because then they teach you how they feel and that just empowers you to be a better coach for future generations.

Terry's emphasis on dialogue, listening to athletes and involving them in pedagogical decisions is consistent with Noddings' (2005) nurturing relationships as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 (Jane's Story). In fact, over time Terry establishes a working relationship where athletes are empowered to care for themselves:

It is a challenge when you have athletes that transition to you when they are mature. I have somebody that's just come to me. He is thirty-two, and in the twilight of his career. His previous coaches have been more trainers, rather than coaches. No that is probably not accurate. He has had someone that's been a coach/trainer as opposed to a coach/educator. Working with me has been quite a change for this athlete.

Whenever I've asked for reflection from him, he's found it quite hard. He's never been asked to reflect before. But gradually, the athlete has learned how to reflect and to feedback and I always encourage a response. For example, "okay, do you need a rest? How tired are you? Do you want to stop there?"

The idea of this athlete deciding not to complete what was set from the outset was a massive culture shock to him. He's always been told that working hard equals success and that working even harder equals even more success. Whereas at his age now, you've got to work smart, and you've got to take into account that you can't do the same volume and intensity of work that you did when you were twenty-four. He has had many issues about feeling guilty when he did not complete what was set for the session. He always said, "Well you're the coach, what should I do? Should I do more?" I threw it back at him, and I said, "Yeah well you're the athlete, you decide". There's only one person in that partnership that fully understands and appreciates the impact that that training is having upon the body, and it's not the coach.

Last week, we were doing a session, and it was a recovery session, therefore the volume of the work was not important. The purpose of the session is to feel a lot better at the end of it than you did at the start. If you work too hard in the recovery session, it is going to impact upon your ability to do the important session the following day. We planned to do five runs, and after three runs the same athlete said, "I think that's enough for me today". I slapped this athlete on the back and said "wow, you've come a long way in a short period of time". The athlete felt good about himself because he had made a good judgement call himself without depending on me.

Terry clearly values the views of athletes and encourages them to take responsibility for their care. It is important to be cautious here however, because Terry has taken a long time to develop this level of autonomy amongst athletes. In fact, during our interviews he was at pains to stress how his relationships develop over time from when athletes are young (e.g. 14 yrs. old) to older athletes (e.g. 32 yrs. old).

My journey as a coach is, initially a teacher, and they are a student. Then I become a coach, and they are an athlete. Then I become a mentor. I suppose in the end, they mentor me back and I love that. I love learning from them.

### *Caring through Technology and Science*

Across the career of an athlete, Terry 'scaffolds' progressions and the autonomy of his athletes (Jones & Thomas, 2015). At times, and particularly with young athletes, Terry will make decisions in the best interests of the athlete. To help him care for athletes, Terry utilises technology to monitor training loads and recovery.

I have this mechanism to check and test them. It cost me a lot of money to buy it and it is no bigger than a phone. The athletes do counter movement jumps with it on. They do 5 of them in the warm up, and it tells me their force, velocity and power. It's brilliant because it is coach friendly. There are a couple of athletes that are more sensitive, and I know that if they reach certain scores, well if they can only reach certain scores then two or three days later they are likely going to be ill. So, they are like my barometer. On Monday when I tested them, a couple of them were near too near the knuckle. So, I just made yesterday a less intense day to stop them being ill. I had to justify myself yesterday, because I changed the programme. The guys turned up expecting something intense and I changed it. Three out of the four athletes were very happy. The fourth said; 'hmmm, I am not sure. You are the coach but why are you changing it?' I reduced the volume and intensity of the work because at the end of last week, the athletes were way too battered and too tired. I said; "look, if we do the same volume and intensity this week as we did last week, some of you are going to get injured or more likely ill".

Thus, at times, Terry will use scientific measurements to care for athletes' health. He does this for the beneficence of athletes, which is consistent with Noddings' (2013) motivational displacement discussed previously (see Chapter 2). On such occasions, he combines these decisions with explanations. In that sense, Terry couples scientific practice with dialogue that Noddings (2013) would approve of. Furthermore, as athletes' progress, Terry encourages athletes to take more ownership of their care. In doing so, Terry combines a caring approach with respect for the autonomy of individuals. Thus although the caring relationships and technology were presented under separate sub-headings, they are interlinked.

### *Initial analysis by Colum Cronin: Two areas to contemplate.*

Terry's story raises at least two areas that are worthy of further analysis. Firstly, Terry's story is focused on his use of logical planning, scientific monitoring and mathematically determined work-rest ratios to care for athletes. This scientific approach to care is different to the maternal servitude associated with Noddings (2005). Indeed, Noddings' nurturing and empathising perspective was influenced by the work of Gilligan (1982) who wrote from a feminist perspective that was critical of scientific practices. Specifically, Gilligan regarded scientifically informed judgements as a blunt form of rule-based control that does not appreciate the perspectives of individuals. From this position, she argued that rule-based decision-making, and rigid scientifically informed actions can appear impersonal and may not consider the emotions of individuals.

A small corpus of recent coaching literature has also lent support to this argument.

Specifically, Williams and Manley (2016) and Cronin, et al. (2017) have highlighted the



potential for sport science and technology to dehumanise athletes by reducing athletic experiences to quantifiable and universal measurements. These case studies have illustrated that coaches may see athletes as resources to be developed as part of an input and output process. This is far from the nurturing caring relationships that Noddings (2005) advocates. That said, Terry's story suggests that technology may not always dehumanise athletes. On the contrary, Terry's technology, measurements, and rule-based judgements appear to have prompted further discussion with the athlete and ensured that the athlete remained healthy.

Indeed, this appears to lead to greater understanding by the athletes. Thus, Terry's story prompts us to consider whether science and technology can enable or conversely limit care in coaching contexts. On a related theme, Reid, Buszard, and Farrow (2018) recently suggested that coaches could manipulate playing field sizes and equipment ratios to prevent injuries and ensure appropriate training loads. The authors suggest that a critical consideration of sport science as a means of caring for the health of athletes is warranted. To explore this concept further, in the next section Kevin Enright will draw upon his experiences as a sport scientist to further consider Terry's story.

In addition, to Kevin's analysis, Terry's story also prompts me (Colum) to consider the relationship between care and autonomy supporting coaching. Specifically, Terry recognises that athletes have knowledge and experiences that he will never have. He is aware that these knowledges bring value to him and the coaching relationship in general. With this premise in mind, Terry advocates a questioning and dialogical approach to coaching which respects the views and autonomy of the athlete. This is evident in the incidents above, where Terry encourages that athlete to decide when they have done enough training. When the athlete does make the decision, Terry respects the athlete's autonomy, understands that the athlete is well placed to appreciate his own body, and praises him for making an autonomous decision. Of course, on another occasion the athlete may not have made the correct decision. In such an instance, offering such autonomy could be regarded as the antithesis of care and perhaps may lead to an injured athlete. Thus, in some circumstances, care and autonomy may not be harmonious concepts (Cronin, et al., 2018). With this tension in mind, I further analyse the relationship between care and autonomy in a later section.

*Theoretical perspective 1: A Sport Science Analysis by Kevin Enright. Does sport science help or hinder caring?*

Sports and exercise science incorporates a range of sub-disciplines that include; physiology, psychology, biomechanics, nutrition, performance analysis and strength-and-conditioning. In professional sport, one of the main aims of the sports scientist is to work closely with the athlete, the coach and other colleagues to improve performance. Depending on the sport and the internal structures within the organisation, the sports-scientist will have a range of roles that typically include collecting data to inform future decision-making processes. In my own (Kevin) physiology practice, I have gathered data that ranges from the number of hours the athlete sleep, the athlete's heart rate during training, to a urine or blood sample. This information can be actioned immediately, or stored and later analysed with the fundamental intention to help coaches alter training programmes so as to achieve predefined training goals. Thus, 'sports scientists' are expected to be objective, methodical and 'evidenced based'. From this position, the role is not often explicitly associated with nurturing care<sup>i</sup>. That said, many sports scientists are implicitly involved in activities that can be directly linked to 'caring' for the athletes' health and wellbeing. The strength coach who rehabilitated the athlete from a broken leg, the nutritionist who screened the athlete for vitamin deficiencies, or the physiologist who noticed an athletes body weight is dramatically dropping, are all examples of how the sports scientist can care for athletes through systematic, evidence based practice. Thus, in some ways caring as Terry does, has much in common with sport science.

Upon reading Terry's story, I was intrigued to note that Terry commits to each athlete for 10 to 20 years. During this time, Terry is not only concerned about talent, but he also plays a caring role that contributes to the development of young people into adulthood. His holistic methods, and the relationships he builds, empower the athlete to make their own decisions. He challenges each person constantly to think for himself or herself, and thus allows them to take ownership of the process. He hopes that 'one day', "they won't need him". In the world of modern professional sports (particularly team sports), it is rare that a sport scientist will work with an athlete for such an extended period across the athlete's career. For example, in some sports, there can be up to 20 support staff around a team of up to 40 athletes. In this regard, there can be many different interactions between athletes and staff every day, limiting the amount of time available to develop meaningful relationships. Thus, for many sports scientists caring acts are limited to short term observations or interventions.

Terry's story has reminded me (Kevin) how data can be used to care for athletes. For example, Terry discusses how his data can predict if an athlete will get ill. Whilst the use of this type of methodology to predict illness is somewhat debatable, (Jones et al. 2017), this

simplified, human approach might be considered more effective than that of more complex interventions. This is because, Terry has the opportunity to contextualise any data collected with all of the other information he has encountered when interacting with the athlete, including feedback from the athlete following the last few training sessions, the splits from the sessions, having a deep understanding of the athletes' personality and lifestyle, and of course, his 'coaches eye'. In other performance environments, there can be lots of isolated 'data points', less 'human interaction' and more variables to consider. As a result, it is sometimes difficult for sport scientists to make clear recommendations or have a real impact on the care of athletes. For example, in my experience as a 'sports scientist' who worked within professional football for almost 10 years, I have noticed that some of the data collection procedures create a situation that treats each athlete (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2016) as a number, or a piece of data that needs to be 'processed', rather than a human that needs care. Indeed, Kennedy and Kennedy (2016) note that modern football clubs' investment strategies promote sports science to be used to nurture young talent as a future asset rather than as a caring mechanism. Others also note that an over reliance of technology and data in modern coaching (Williams and Manley, 2016), can reduce the coaching process into a mundane exercise, the sole purpose of which, is to develop players as commodities.

This 'mundane', 'data (ec)centric' approach is in line with some of my own experiences. I remember in a previous role as a 'sports scientist' I travelled with an international team of under-16 players to a tournament in Europe for about 10 days. Before I left, I was given a brief from my line manager to collect what he referred to as 'wellness data' every morning. Here, the intention was that this information could be used as a discussion point with the coach at breakfast and would inform how the players were 'cared for' during the day. Whilst in principle this was a logical idea, in practice the situation became a laptop data entering process with little to no impact on the coaches' behaviour, or the ability of the support staff to care for the athlete and/or help them achieve their goals. I recall it as follows:

"Morning lads (the players), ok, could I (Kevin) just get you to take of your shoes and jump on the scales. Thanks, ok now the urine tube I gave you last night did you remember to pee into it this morning? Great, just let me analyse this quickly. Whilst I'm doing this can you pop some numbers into the laptop under your name, please.

You just need to fill in how many hours you slept last night, the quality of your sleep, a score out of 10 saying how fatigued you feel, a score to tell us how sore you are; if you are sore just pop in the box the muscles that are sore. Oh yea, can you fill in a score for your general health too, that would be great. Sorry, when you're done, the physio would like to test your hamstring flexibility and the strength of your adductors". Just 21 players to go! We will be at breakfast in no time!

After all the information was inputted into the laptop I had 10 minutes to decipher whether there were any care issues before the coaches met at breakfast. I arrived at breakfast with my laptop and was ready to inform the coaches' practice. I could describe the scenario as follows:

"Hey coach, I (Kevin) just wanted to let you know that Johnny didn't recover well from training (he had 9 out of 10 on his fatigue score) and Mark didn't sleep that well last night (he had a 2 out of 10 on his sleep quality score) so you might want to go easy on them today in training". He (the coach) looked at me like I'd just arrived off the latest ship from Mars, and said; "yes, thanks Kev that's great, but I need Johnny and Mark to be involved today. We need to go through the high pressing phase of play that we have been working on. Oh, and there's a few other areas we need to work on, so we will need to see how they react when we get out there". I replied saying,

"Ok, great, no problem, you're the boss, I will see you out at the field. I've just got to go and get all the GPS units and heart-rate belts ready". It was at that point that I realised the goal was limited to gathering the data itself, rather than to use the data to care for players.

Whilst not universal, a mentality that sees players as 'cogs in a performance machine' rather than as humans, is too common in professional sport (Williams & Manley, 2016). Both my own experiences and the discussions I have had with other sports scientists corroborate this feeling. I believe this type of interaction can dehumanise the relationships between athletes, coaches and support staff, ultimately limiting any care that sports science or technology could provide. Thus, I was pleased and interested to see how Terry used technology to care.

Specifically, Terry used technology within well-developed relationships that not only value the athletes as individuals but also involved athletes as part of the decision making process. From this position, technology was used as a means to an end (i.e. caring for athletes), rather than as an end in itself (i.e. to produce an output or spreadsheet).

DRAFT

*Theoretical perspective 2: A pedagogical analysis by Colum Cronin. Is care compatible with facilitating autonomy?*

When reading Terry's story, it was obvious to me that Terry's pedagogical practice is aimed toward facilitating and developing athlete autonomy;

I see myself as an educator. Educating those athletes on how we do it and why we do it. The training of PE teachers is not as good now as it used to be for decades. Which is a shame, because the greatest coaches in sport have always had a teacher training background?

They should be self-sufficient to be able to go to a competition, warm up, and compete on their own. Athletes should not keep looking to the stands for reinforcement from the coach. It annoys me so intensely.

Such a pedagogical approach is not new to sport coaching. Classic sport pedagogy literature such as Mosston's Styles (1966) and Bunker and Thorpe's (1982) Teaching Games for Understanding have advocated questioning as a means of initiating cognitive work that leads to athlete understanding and independent learning. Similarly, much sport psychology (e.g. Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Duda, 2013; Langdon, et al., 2015) and more recent pedagogy literature (e.g. Nelson, et al., 2014; Kidman & Lombardo, 2010) have also argued for athletes and participants to take ownership of their learning. Despite this body of work, evidence suggests that much coaching practice remains coach centred and autocratic, with the voice of athletes rarely heard (Denison, Mills, & Konoval, 2017). For example, there is evidence that it is coaches who predominantly ask questions in training environments and they do so in a didactic and closed manner that reinforces their own positions as gatekeepers of knowledge (Cope, Partington, Cushion, & Harvey, 2016). Against this backdrop, it is noteworthy that Terry encourages his athletes to question him, and to exercise autonomous decision making about their own care.

There's only one person in that partnership that fully understands and appreciates the impact that that training is having upon the body, and it's not the coach.

This role reversal demonstrates a respect for the autonomy of the individual and Terry's desire to listen to athletes rather than to elicit coercive agreement for a pre-determined decision. Answering athlete questions, listening to athlete's views, and initiating conversations that are genuinely dialogic align with Noddings' (2005) care ethic. Specifically, as discussed in Chapter 2, Noddings argues that individuals need to autonomously receive, accept and acknowledge care in order for a relationship to be deemed consensual and caring.

Care and autonomy are however complex concepts. For example, through his emphasis on athlete autonomy, Terry could be seen as an absentee coach who neglected his duty to *care for* his athletes. There are two episodes that relate to this perspective. First, in his introduction, Terry explains passionately how he wants athletes to warm up on their own and reflect on their own performance. Secondly, in a later incident Terry refuses to tell an athlete what to do; instead, he asks the athlete to make decisions about his own training load. Such actions could have negative consequences for the athlete's performance and health; e.g., injury could occur if the athlete does not warm up correctly. Yet, despite these potential consequences, Terry accedes to the view of the athlete in the decision-making process. An observer could perceive this as a neglectful act consistent with the absence of care. These incidents, therefore, prompted me to consider whether facilitating athlete autonomy is contradictory to care, or whether Terry could be caring about the long term personal growth of his athlete by 'standing aside' and not intervening?

Upon first consideration, Terry's standing aside approach appears to be contradictory to Noddings' (2005) notions of a total engrossment and devoted maternal servitude. On secondary consideration, I tentatively suspect that standing aside is an act that Terry carefully considers. I reach this conclusion because Terry scaffolds his pedagogical approach throughout his athlete's career;

You educate athletes to independently cope, and bring them up in a way so that they can do without the coach.... I say to athletes; "It is your responsibility, you have to develop, take ownership, and evaluate. And I have to educate".

My journey as a coach is, initially a teacher, and they are a student. Then I become a coach, and they are an athlete. Then I become a mentor.

Thus, for me (Colum), Terry's standing aside is not neglect, but a means of caring for the long-term development of athletes through absence and challenge. Indeed, Terry has carefully scaffolded his practice to ensure that athletes are prepared for 'the loneliness of competition'. Additionally, Fine and Glendinning, (2005, p. 616) support Terry's approach by arguing that it is important to respect the autonomy, of both the carer, and cared for.

Rather than being a unidirectional activity in which an active care-giver does something to a passive and dependent recipient ... care is best understood as the product or outcome of the relationship between two or more people. On this basis, if Terry were to deny the autonomy of athletes, he could be accused of engaging in smothering paternalism (Hargreaves and Tucker, 1991), or controlling behaviours that negatively influence athletes

(Hedge and MacKenzie, 2012; Tomkins and Simpson, 2015). These outcomes are far from the reciprocal caring relationships based upon dialogue that Noddings advocates (see chapter 2 for more discussion of Noddings' work). Caring therefore can involve a delicate balance of aiding individuals, whilst simultaneously respecting and facilitating the autonomy of individuals. Without an appropriate balance, individuals can be disempowered (too much intervention) or neglected (too little intervention). Terry strikes this balance by being empathetic to and meeting athlete's needs, whilst also providing space and time for personal growth and autonomy. Of course, this balance is influenced by situated factors; e.g. the experience of athletes. Terry's two-way dialogical relationship and his long term 'scaffolded' pedagogy, therefore, appear to be a good example of a symbiotic and dynamic relationship, which changes over time, but ensures that athletes are cared for as autonomous individuals.

### *Implications from Terry's Story*

Terry's story illustrates a long-term pedagogical approach to coaching, which is based upon care. Indeed, Terry makes a commitment to athletes and seeks to care for them across their careers. He does this by recognising that care is done *with*, rather than *to* athletes. This caring practice is characterised by dialogue and athlete autonomy. It does, however, take time to develop these relationships and Terry 'scaffolds' his relationships with athletes. As athletes develop, he facilitates more input, and ownership from them. He also changes his language from a coach led 'what he sees' approach, to an athlete centred 'feeling' approach. Thus, he carefully facilitates athlete autonomy (Cronin, Walsh, Quayle, Whittaker, & Whitehead, 2018). In addition, Terry uses technology to add value, prompt discussion and inform his care. This is a 'rules based' conception of care, which has not been highly visible in Noddings' nurturing approach. Terry's story, therefore, extends the maternal notion of care by illustrating how rules based science can add value and a different form of care to nurturing relationships. Data can prompt conversations that empower athletes, conversely, technology can be problematic and disempowering (Cronin, Whitehead, Webster, & Huntley, 2017). Thus, Terry's story has some interesting considerations for coaches, coach educators, coaching researchers, and sport scientists to explore. Specifically;

- 1) There are times when the coach, with their knowledge, experience and 'coaching eye' is best placed to care for an athlete; e.g. avoiding overtraining. **Coaches**, therefore need to consider how and when they enact a 'duty of care' in their practice?



- 2) Authentic caring relationships are dialogical and consensual. Therefore, **coaches** should consider how they have gained consent for their care? Indeed, respecting the autonomy of athletes is not only ethical; it may also mitigate dependence, enabling athletes to ‘self-care’ and helping them to thrive in competition. Are athletes appropriately informed when consenting to coaching? Do coaches respect and facilitate the autonomous choices of athletes?
- 3) Developing caring relationships, which are dialogical and consensual, is a challenging and dynamic task. These relationships are contextual and influenced by both coaches and athletes. Thus as athletes develop, caring relationships should be ‘scaffolded’ over time. This requires **coaches** to consider; what behaviours and language might coaches use in order to progressively foster caring relationships? How do they plan to develop caring relationships?
- 4) If used within reciprocal caring relationships, technology can be a useful means to an end (i.e. caring for athletes). Technology can, however, be used to control or dehumanise athletes. Thus, **coaches, coach educators, and coach researchers** need to consider what technology is achieving within coaching practice, and how it can add value to caring relationships? Technology is likely to become more sophisticated, powerful and invasive over time. These questions therefore need to be asked repeatedly, to ensure that technology adds value and does not distract from caring relationships.
- 5) **Sport scientists** often have technology, knowledge and skills that may enable them to care in a rule-based manner. How can sports scientists and coaches work together to develop caring strategies for athletes? What data is necessary to care for athletes? What do the athletes want and need? Can a rules based approach to care be coupled with a pedagogical relationship? These are important and ongoing questions for **coaching researchers** and **sport science lecturers** to answer, in order to help athletes flourish.

In sum, Terry’s story illustrates that relationships are key to a caring pedagogy that helps athletes and coaches make better, more informed, decisions. His caring relationships have developed over time and are based on scaffolded dialogue, education and autonomy. Effective coaches, and indeed sport scientists, should therefore consider how they educate athletes to ‘self-care’. For example, coaches and sport scientists could educate athletes about how to improve their diet, how to improve their sleep patterns, or suggest ways they could warm their bodies up before training. Technology may be a prompt and aid for

such caring pedagogy. After all, helping athletes to care for themselves might be the best use of the limited time that coaches and sport scientists have with athletes.

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<sup>i</sup> An exception to this might be sport psychologists and lifestyle advisors who are often called in to help athletes with 'issues'.

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