More than Performance Coaching : A Case Study of Spacetime Psychology

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Keywords:

Mindfulness, Acceptance; Functional Contextualism; Process-Based Therapy

Abstract

Esports games promote performance cultures with visible ranking systems encouraging social prestige through success and achievement. We believe this performance culture has artificially narrowed the scope for what is expected from psychology practitioners within the industry. In this study we look to demonstrate that performance is one of many potential success criteria for psychological support within esports. Our case study documents the work I [Blinded] did with Mars, a League of Legends player, within our spacetime approach to process-based therapy. After a needs analysis, we worked together on reducing avoidance and improving acceptance, in line with clinical psychology theory, before working on mindfulness, in line with (sport) performance psychology theory, in addition to exercise participation. Quantitative results showed large to huge improvements in mindfulness and acceptance ($0.8 \leq g \leq 2.5$), and Mars's qualitative feedback reflected these improvements as well as reporting better performance under pressure and stress, and regular exercise participation. In our reflections, we encourage philosophically-informed, flexible, individualised approaches to psychological support and further encourage the development of performance and well-being simultaneously through their shared underlying processes.

Introduction

Esports games promote performance cultures. Unlike many other traditional performance environments, esports games present players with very visible ranking systems and reward players for their performance within them (e.g., Laserface, 2024). These ranking systems form social distinctions among players and motivate players to engage in esports through perceptions of competence and achievement (Kallio et al., 2011; Kou et al., 2016; Yee, 2006);

self-esteem built from success on these systems may even drive further engagement through increased enjoyment, and positive affect (Birk et al., 2015). Esports teams and organisations support this emphasis on performance and ranking success. The clearest example of this is the name of Natus Vincere (“Born to Win” in Latin), but it is very common for esports teams to highlight their performance achievements above all else. For example, the first big UK organisation I searched for, Fnatic, had this as their Google search by-line “*Fnatic* is the world's leading *esports* organisation, with a winning legacy of 17 years and counting in over 28 different titles.” We believe these performance cultures prioritise performance over player well-being, despite both being underpinned by the same processes (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Hayes et al., 1999; Horne, Mogridge, & Sharpe, 2024).

We believe this focus on performances narrows how psychologists are used, perceived, and promoted within the industry. From our experience working in the field, the most common label for sport psychology practitioners in esports is performance coaches. Performance coaches are typically generalist roles where practitioners, who may or may not have adequate qualifications, deliver players psychological, physiological, and potentially coaching support to improve performance (Horne, Burkill et al., 2024; Swettenham et al., 2024). However, psychological support is not just performance-based, and we have previously argued that performance and well-being are intrinsically linked through attention regulation, and questioned whether or not a solely performance-based approach is ethical or effective [Blinded for review]. As psychology practitioners, we have often wanted to run more well-being focused interventions, but these are neglected, or at least less prioritised by the esports groups we have worked within.

An over-emphasis on performance-focused interventions may alienate clients and/or worsen their outcomes. While performance interventions can be excellent, they are dependent on clients’ being ready for them (Horne et al., 2025). Groups workshops, for example, may exacerbate health inequalities in groups [Blinded], as while some clients’ therapeutic windows are open to the interventions and thus benefit from them, other clients may feel alienated or worse, re-traumatised, by approaches such as mindfulness or pressure training (Horne et al., 2025). In this case study we argue that individualised, philosophy-informed psychological support is best for both player performance and well-being - especially in cases of performance issues - a generalist, performance-based approach to psychology is simply not suitable for everyone. The below case study of my (the first author’s) work with Mars documents how, based on our spacetime case formulation of poor behavioural persistence [Blinded], we first worked together on clinical, acceptance-based interventions before moving towards performance interventions in later sessions.

Context

The Client

Mars, a 22 year-old, cis-gender male, reached out to me after I advertised my availability for individualised sport psychology sessions on social media. Mars had been struggling with

confidence and performance in League of Legends games, while he had begun to work on these issues himself, he reached out to me to look for more support. At the time, Mars was struggling to perform as he would have liked in division 2 of a EMEA Regional League or ERL (see Riot Games, 2023), starting that year, alongside studying as a university student.

According to Poulus et al. (2024)'s classification of elite esports competition, Mars would be considered a non-elite player. According to Gardner and Moore's (2004)'s sport psychology classification, Mars would be considered a "Performance Dysfunction" case as while performance behaviour was the main motivator and goal for the intervention, Mars reported there were psychological barriers to his performance.

The Practitioner

At the time, I, the first author, was closing my first year of training towards being a Health and Care Professions Council-registered Sport and Exercise Psychologist on the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences' Sport and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route (BASES SEPAR). In my practice I had developed and now use a philosophical foundation of functional contextualism and relational frame theory to understand behaviour [Blinded], and was finalising my understanding of how those behaviours may change across contexts and time within our neurodiversity-friendly attention-based spacetime meta-model of applied psychology [Blinded]. This pragmatic philosophy, epistemology, and understanding of spacetime behaviour were used in this paper through our case formulation below.

At the time, I had experience working with groups and running workshops at the time of delivery, but I had less experience working with individual clients in 1-on-1 contexts. In a past case study, I identified and critiqued issues with workshop-based psychoeducation and group-based work, and as a result argued that individualised work may be more beneficial for meaningful behaviour change [Blinded for review]. This current case study documents me taking my own advice as I have gradually moved away from rigid workshop-style delivery into more flexible, experiential, and workability-focused interventions with clients.

The Case

My initial needs analysis and case formulation were done across an initial consultation session (Chow et al., 2022), followed up by a more formal intake interview in a separate session. Just under three weeks passed between the initial consultation and the intake interview, and Mars filled out psychometric measures (see below) 2 days before the intake interview.

Initial Consultation

Mars reached out to me on social media wanting to improve his confidence, and we discussed this in a short initial consultation. Mars shared his struggles with low self-confidence, and reported that he sees a therapist for his anxiety and takes medication. He reported wanting to

feel more confident, wanting to stop thinking he is not good enough, and wanting to not be afraid to perform. When asked what actions this would allow him to do, functionally Mars said this would mean playing in a more disciplined way, and being more robust in situations where things in game did not go as planned. During the discussion, I noted down that Mars seemed to be attached to verbal tracking rules (Hayes et al., 1999) of "*If I don't have confidence I play worse, I train worse*" and "*if I have confidence I will play better*".

At this stage, I sought and received consent to use this and further information for a case study for academic publication. I also sought and received continued consent as our work together finished, and after that I shared a completed draft of this case study. Information that Mars was not comfortable with was either removed or falsified to retain meaning, similar to my previous reports [Blinded for review].

Psychometric Testing

Psychological flexibility processes of mindful attention, acceptance, and avoidance were measured across three measures in line with our performance-integrated applied psychology meta-model [Blinded].

ADHD traits were measured by the The World Health Organization Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale (ASRS; Kessler et al., 2005). The ASRS measures inattention and hyperactivity traits across a five-point scale of Never to Very Often. I chose to use the six-item screener version of the ASRS over the long-form 18-item version to shorten the assessment load on ADHD.

Mindfulness was measured by the mindful attention awareness scale (MAAS-5; Van Dam et al., 2010). The MAAS-5 is a five-item unidimensional scale which measures poor mindfulness (e.g., "*I find myself doing things without paying attention*") over a six point scale of Never to Almost Always. Combined with ADHD-related traits measured above, these measures crudely facilitate assessment of attention selection and retention in line with process-based therapy meta-models (e.g., Horne, Mogridge, & Sharpe, 2024; Ong et al., 2024).

Psychological Flexibility variables of experiential acceptance and avoidance were measured by Kashdan et al. (2020)'s personalised psychological flexibility index (PPFI - 15) across a 7-point scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. Unlike other measures of psychological flexibility, the PPFI is distinct from negative emotionality (Kashdan et al., 2020). Thus is a better measure of acceptance/ variation in the process-based therapy theory above. The PPFI is also contextually bound, and requires people to rate their acceptance/ avoidance in relation to particular goals in life. Mars intuitively wrote four goals, which I decided to keep consistent at each data collection for consistency:

1. Being able to push myself and put in the time to actually realise the goals that I set for myself.
2. Being able to work better within a team environment/ with other people.
3. Build up mental resilience for when things don't go the way I planned them to

4. Being confident in my own skills / knowledge that I have to use in specific situations.

Mars rated himself particularly highly in low mindful attention (5.4 out of a maximum 6; see Table 1 below), roughly neutral in acceptance (3.9 on 1-7 scale), and between slightly agree and agree for avoidance items (5.5 on 1.7 scale). Mars met 3 of the 5 thresholds for clinical referral, rating himself as experiencing fidgeting and demand avoidance “very often”.

Intake Interview

The aims of my intake interview were to assess Mars’s biopsychosocial context more comprehensively in line with our theory of behaviour [Blinded], and, if the intake interview was coherent with the psychometric data, to evoke a sense of creative hopelessness around the control/ avoidance strategies Mars was using (Hayes et al., 1999). By using a model of behaviour, rather than an intake interview guide (e.g., Taylor & Schneider, 1992), I was better able to ask questions flexibility and develop rapport with Mars.

In the intake interview, Mars discussed more in depth what behaviour he would like to change. Mars reported wanting more resilience and persistence during stressful situations. At the time, he noted that in-game setbacks would cause frustration, anxiety, and upset, and during our discussion Mars described how that impairs his ability to stay present, communicate effectively and make the best decisions for his team. For example, if Mars got behind in-game, Mars would feel frustrated and have thoughts of “I’m not good enough” and then demand more team for himself. If this did not occur, Mars reported, on occasion, making unfair comments to teammates which he later apologised for. We discussed that these responses might be an avoidance behaviour where he is looking for a chance to make himself feel better after feeling frustration and low self-confidence by having the chance to redeem himself, instead of focusing more team resources around a player who is already doing well - a decision that may be better for team success.

Outside of League of Legends, Mars reported recently getting back into exercise, playing squash recreationally and occasionally. Mars reported eating well, well, but has historically and currently struggled with sleep. Mars also reported addiction issues being in the family, and notes that autism as a diagnostic label has been something that he and his friend group have discussed amongst themselves. Mars reported that he had supportive relationships with his family and ate well.

Case Formulation

I assessed Mars’s primary behavioural issue as poor behaviour persistence in stressful, pressurised contexts across attention, thoughts, feelings, and actions (Hayes et al., 2019; Ong et al., 2024; [Blinded]). This could be due to worse behavioural retention (see Hayes et al., 2019; Hayes et al., 2020; Horne, Modgridge & Sharpe, 2024), as Mars reported issues only

happening after things go poorly in-game and rated himself higher on ADHD-related traits, but also could be partly due to lower behavioural selection, indicated by lower general ratings of mindful awareness (Horne, Modgridge & Sharpe, 2024). This poor behavioural retention and selection, specifically in regards to attention, may both contribute to Mars' worsening performances after mistakes and his feelings of low self-confidence (Gardner & Moore, 2007; Hayes et al., 1999; Horne, Modgridge, & Sharpe, 2024).

This poor behavioural retention could be related to both high avoidance and below ideal acceptance of discomfort. Avoidance of thoughts such as the above "I'm not good enough" may, under the pressure and cognitive load of his League of Legends game, only make these thoughts more present (Wang et al., 2020), and not mindfully accepting them, as Mars reported, may be negatively impacting his team communication and performance. This avoidance could have easily been learned while living within our capitalist, patriarchal culture (French, 1993; Hayes et al., 1999), or while working in a competitive high performance culture (Horne & Swettenham, 2024a), but it could also be partly due to the neurodevelopment differences in the neurodiversity Mars noted above, as ADHD behaviours are positively correlated with demand avoidance (e.g., $r = 0.71$; Egan et al., 2020).

Developing and Delivering the Intervention

In line with our spacetime theory, sustained task-directed attention is the key behavioural process of both performance and well-being, and this was our end goal of working together [Blinded]. However, considering Mars's high reported experiential avoidance and lower acceptance, Mars and I agreed to work on building upon these contextual factors first. If we first started with more performance-focused mindful/ focused attention exercises, we could perhaps only entrench Mars' control agenda where Mars is doing these exercises because I ask him to, rather than because he has experientially and meaningfully seen their benefit (Hayes et al., 1999; Horne et al., 2025; Horne & Swettenham, 2024a).

Acceptance-based approaches were chosen over other popular cognitive behaviourism-based approaches in esports due to them not needing to fix or suppress thoughts and feelings and thus being not only more human but more appropriate for performance contexts with high cognitive load (Wang et al., 2020; see Goldman & Gervis, 2024; Horne & Swettenham, 2024ab, Horne, Mogridge, & Sharpe, 2024 for discussions). Acceptance-based approaches of the Mindfulness-Acceptance Commitment Approach (MAC; Gardner & Moore, 2007) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Hayes et al., 1999) were also chosen to help and provide support in a timely, psychoeducational manner, especially as Mars approached me primarily looking for guidance rather than social, emotional support.

Based on these modalities, our sessions were practitioner-led with me using the below structure to guide our conversation in sessions. This structure was not dogmatic and was flexible if Mars wanted to discuss something else. Sessions 1-4 first addressed more clinical needs, inspired by

ACT and the chapters in Hayes et al. (1999), while updated with some newer material and recommendations such as nature exposure (Horne & Sharpe, 2024). Sessions 4-6 were more performance psychoeducation focused and used interventions to develop sustained attention in the face of discomfort inspired by the MAC approach and my own theory (see Gardner & Moore, 2007; [Blinded for review]). After the review, session 7 used a person-centred approach (e.g., Gupta & Duncan, 2023), coherent with my above philosophy, to more spontaneously work on what was relevant to Mars at the time. Throughout the sessions I encouraged and supported Mars to continue with regular exercise, inside and outside of the squash club he had previously played with. I introduced psychophysiological somatic-therapy based techniques such as slow breathing from session 4 onwards.

1. Intake Interview and Creative Hopelessness
2. Acceptance: Control is the problem, not the solution
3. Defusion, Self-as-context, and Open Monitoring Mindfulness
4. Values and Value-driven behaviour
5. Focused, Present Moment Attention for performance and rest
6. Content Review, Pre-Performance Routines, and Progressions with Imagery
7. Progress Review; Person-centred Therapy

Sessions 1-6 took place over approximately 3 months, with the review session (#7) taking place a month and a half after session 6. After the seventh session, I gave the option for Mars to continue working with me within the more person-centred approach I did with the last session. However, at the time of writing, Mars has not sought more sessions.

Mars' progress was measured quantitatively through repeating the initial psychometric testing during sessions 6 and 7. Mars' progress was assessed qualitatively through his shared thoughts and experiences, and in a review interview in session 7.

Results

Quantitatively, Mars's psychological flexibility processes of mindfulness, acceptance, and avoidance improved from the intake assessment to the end of the psychoeducational content; and this improvement was mostly maintained in the follow-up session, a month and a half later ($0.8 \leq g \leq 2.5$; see Table 1). In qualitative accounts from the follow-up session, Mars agreed with and corroborated my interpretations of the data, as well as described more functional outcomes of our work together.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Mars's quantitative data

	Intake	Session 6	Session 7
ADHD	3.5 (1.3)	2.7 (1.3)	3.2 (1.1)
Low Mindfulness	5.4 (0.9)	3.6 (0.5)	3.8 (0.8)
Acceptance G1	3 (1.2)	6.2 (0.8)	5.6 (0.5)
Acceptance G2	3.4 (1.7)	5.6 (0.9)	5.2 (1.6)
Acceptance G3	4.2 (2.6)	5.6 (1.1)	6.2 (0.4)
Acceptance G4	4.8 (1.6)	6.2 (0.8)	3.8 (1.1)
Acceptance All	3.9 (1.9)	5.9 (0.9)	5.2 (1.3)
Avoidance G1	6.2 (0.8)	3.4 (1.1)	2.4 (0.9)
Avoidance G2	5.4 (0.9)	2.8 (0.8)	5 (1.2)
Avoidance G3	5 (1.9)	4.2 (0.8)	2.2 (0.4)
Avoidance G4	5.2 (0.8)	1.4 (0.5)	3.6 (1.1)
Avoidance All	5.5 (1.2)	2.95 (1.3)	3.3 (1.5)

Scores
ADHD: 1 Never - 5 very often; **Low Mindfulness:** 1 Never - 6 almost always; **Acceptance and Avoidance:** 1 Strongly Disagree - 7 Strongly Agree

The largest changes in Mars's psychometrics scores during our work together were in mindfulness and avoidance. Low mindfulness scores had the largest improvements of all variables, improving very greatly between content sessions 1-6 (5.4 to 3.6, g = -2.5) and similarly keeping this improvement at the follow-up (5.4 to 3.8, g = -1.9; Cohen, 1977). Mars' avoidance also greatly reduced over our work together in the content sessions 1-6 (5.5 to 2.95, g = - 2.0), and this change was again mostly maintained in the follow up (5.5 to 3.3, g = 1.6). An anomaly within this Avoidance data is for goal 2, being able to work better in a team environment. Within the follow-up session Mars and I discussed this, and he reported that this rating was related to recent issues with group work at university causing his context to be more

stressful than it was previously. We discussed how this harsher context may somewhat explain the slight drop in all variables between session 6 and 7.

Mars's acceptance scores also improved across our work together: acceptance improved greatly across the content sessions 1-6 (3.9 to 5.9, g = 1.3), and this change was somewhat maintained in the follow up session (3.9 to 5.2, g = 0.8). While these acceptance effect sizes are not as large as those above, a minimum score of 0.8 is still considered a large improvement (Cohen, 1977). Mars's ratings also showed a small-medium reduction in ADHD-related behaviour across the content sessions (3.5 to 2.7 g = - 0.6), and between the intake session and the follow-up (3.5 to 3.2, g = - 0.2; Cohen, 1977). In discussions of this, however, this did not seem as meaningful as a change as the above.

Functionally, Mars described himself having better relationships with exercise, stress, and pressure in League of Legends and his recreational squash games. Mars reported that, after our work together he exercises a lot more regularly: "*I'm working out quite a bit now, .. mostly squash. … and I'm just talking walks everyday*", and that he feels that it improves his psychological and physical health short- and long-term "*It's good for my body and mentally I think it's pretty good when I actually play*." Mars also reported that the psychoeducation in our sessions has improved helped his participation in squash, as well as League of Legends through his relationships with his performances in both:

> "I had the same thing with league where I would be annoyed if I didn't do well, but, now - and it's the same with squash - now I don't really mind it too much cause I know I'm doing something good, and I doesn't really matter how well I do or not"

Mars also described how him taking breaks from League of Legends has helped him perform under pressure and stress, and accept feelings of frustration, even if that break has slightly impacted his skills in-game:

> "That's also something I've done for myself, is play a little bit less league, which actually kinda was good for me, I just took a small break from actually try-harding, playing a lot. It has negatively impacted my skills a bit but that's fine cause I know that everytime I play now, I think I'm way off better, like mentally I'm better at least, I don't really get that tilted or mad, or when I get mad I accept it a lot, so that really helped, especially just taking that break, I think was quite needed, cause I've just played a lot of league in the last few years without taking a break ever"

Discussion

Mars approached me as a practitioner looking to improve his confidence in games. After our work together, Mars improved his relationships with exercise and sport, stress, anxiety, and low self-confidence, and his ability to sustain his performance in League of Legends and squash

after mistakes. Quantitative, psychometric improvements shown across the program, often $g > 1$, and sometimes $g > 2$, reflected these profound, meaningful changes in Mars's life and psychology. Due to the largest improvements being in trait mindfulness, this improvement in behavioural persistence is likely due to improved behavioural selection (Hayes et al., 2019; Hayes et al., 2020; Ong et al., 2024; [Blinded]). I believe that Mars's choices to not continue working together, or at least not nearly as often, reflect his independence we have developed together over our sessions, rather than a dissatisfaction with the work.

Generally, the results reported above document the strength of an integrated approach to performance and well-being. Cohen (1977)'s recommendations argue that effect sizes above .8 are considered large. Effect sizes above 2 are astronomical, though not always uncommon in single case designs (Barker et al., 2020). Like previous studies too (see Barker et al., 2020), these effect sizes may be larger due to Mars starting from a lower point, especially in mindfulness and avoidance; starting higher in acceptance, for example, there was less of a quantitative improvement as measured by the psychometrics. Typically publication bias tends to be an issue with the validity of single case designs, and controlling for this has more than halved effect sizes (Barker et al., 2020). However, we chose this case study not due to these psychometric changes, but rather as a critique of, and reflection on, performance culture in esports, and this being the only fitting case study where we sought and received informed consent from our clients to participate in a case study. That said, being a case study, this intervention design may not be fitting for other clients with other needs, nor are the conversations we have necessarily replicable. Regardless, we are able to illustrate the qualitative, functional changes and quantitative psychometric changes that acceptance-first, spacetime psychology can bring for esports athletes. We continue to welcome additional philosophically-informed case studies to demonstrate different approaches and different success criteria within esports [Blinded for review].

However, how you, as the reader, view the success of this program may well depend on your definition of success for player psychological support within esports. If you, like the esports organisations we mentioned above, primarily identify success in esports with performance, winning, and domination, you may see this case study as a failure. After all, Mars noted that during sessions 6 and 7, he took a small break and that that negatively impacted his skills "a bit", even if he performed better under pressure. However, to me, and the philosophy we present in this and our other work, what is most important is what meaning our clients derive from our work together. As Mars was simply not concerned about being slightly out of practice after a holiday, neither was I as the practitioner.

We feel here it is also worth reiterating here that Mars is also a student and a human being alongside his performance which would be classified as "non-elite" by Poulus et al. (2024)'s classification system. You could, arguably in bad faith, use this information to argue that psychological services worsen performance for well-being. However, in a full-time professional team, players arguably have fewer other responsibilities to balance and prioritise with esports performance, and more individual and organisational cost of poor performance under pressure. In this case, we believe the idea of a trade-off between performance and well-being is a fallacy:

players may dissociate to protect themselves from pressure or stress, but to do so would worsen both their performance and well-being long-term, alongside their immediate and long-term performance under stress or pressure (Horne, Mogridge, & Sharpe, 2024; Wang et al., 2020). We wholeheartedly encourage engagement with individualised psychological support for anyone whose performances have meaningful consequences.

Practitioner Reflections

This work was thus far the most fulfilling work I have done yet as a practitioner. I feel like I was able to form a supportive practitioner-client relationship and helped create meaningful behaviour change in a healthy way for Mars. I feel honoured to have been able to do so. Additionally, unlike most of my earlier work, I also earned money from these sessions which helped fund my living expenses and training costs. While this career is still not self-sufficient and financially viable for me, this work and other work I did at the time was a ray of hope in a career that may or may not come to be.

From my experience and success with Mars and other clients around this time, individual work such as this will be the continued focus of my model of practice as a practitioner - at least in regards to psychological, mindfulness and acceptance-based approaches to discomfort (e.g., Hayes et al., 1999) where clients' would benefit from needs analyses and case formulations. Compared to workshop-based work, which may exacerbate psychological health inequalities and alienate those struggling the most (Horne & Swettenham, 2024a), these individual 1-2-1 sessions allowed me to build practitioner-client relationships, facilitate client disclosure and discussion of experiences and individualise my approach to fit client needs. Progressing in my career I see so much more merit in providing a thorough service for clients who are ready and wanting of it, rather than sacrificing the quality of psychological support for either time or to appeal to those with lower buy-in. Through an individualised approach, I may gain more buy-in for people unwilling to disclose information in groups, as well as gradually generate buy-in in those initially sceptical as they see their teammates' improvements over time.

My work with Mars has also inspired me to take a step back from esports participation. Within our work so far we have advocated very strongly for self-care for practitioners [Blinded] - we believe practitioners need to be as healthy as possible to remain effective, empathetic, and supportive towards our clients (Quartiroli et al., 2019). Naturally what self-care means to each practitioner will vary, but for me, in addition to seeking my own psychological support, peer collaboration, and supervision, I have realised self-care for me is no longer playing esports. While writing up this case study I have realised that I enjoy watching esports far more than I enjoy playing them: it is rare now that I will play esports games and still be glad that I played when I lose, even if that game is an unranked/normal game, or that game is played with friends. Using esports to wind down from busy and often stressful jobs often feels like it backfires in ways that my other hobbies never do - I get sad, frustrated, or at least wired. Even within gaming, the draw of esports competition pales in comparison to the artistry of non-esports titles'

music, gameplay, narrative choices, and visual direction - any rewards that may or may not arrive from outcompeting others ultimately feel hollow and meaningless. Like Mars, I have taken a break from esports participation and my well-being has improved - while my esports performance has not improved, I have been better able to give time and attention to things that are more meaningful to me than a performance ranking.

Conclusion

In this case study we show that an individualised, holistic, spacetime approach to applied psychology can be very successful in improving the mindfulness and acceptance processes underlying performance and well-being ($g \leq 2.5$; Blinded]). While Mars reported his skills dropping “a bit”, his reported performance under pressure improved, all while he chose to prioritise his education, sport participation, and social life. Contrary to esports’ performance culture, Mars found meaning in playing League of Legends less. We stress the value of a meaningful, flexible, functional approach to psychology, which encourages our clients, not the industry, to set their own definition of success for our work together. Additionally, we encourage psychology practitioners to flexibly draw from applied psychology disciplines outside of only (e)sport psychology to best suit client needs. Where possible, we advocate for individualised 1-on-1 psychological support as a more ethical, effective, and arguably more rewarding means of working.

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