

Can motivational speeches pump up your gym performance?

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Match the words with the pictures.

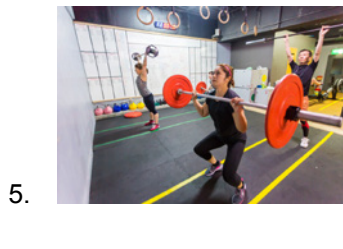
barbell

bench press

dumbbell

kettlebell

medicine ball



2 Key words

a. Read the definitions below and find the words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

burnout

counterintuitive

infiltrate

isolation

lone wolf

momentum

overindulge

snippet

underdog

wannabe

1. a noun meaning *a short piece of information or news* _____ (paragraph 1)
2. a verb meaning *allow yourself to have too much of something you enjoy, especially food or drink* _____ (paragraph 2)
3. a noun often used as an adjective meaning *someone who wants to be famous or successful* _____ (paragraph 3)
4. a noun meaning *someone that seems least likely to win a competition* _____ (paragraph 4)

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5. a noun meaning *the state of being apart or away from other people* _____
(paragraph 5)
6. a noun phrase meaning *someone who likes to be or work alone* _____
(paragraph 6)
7. an adjective meaning *opposite to what seems obvious or natural* _____
(paragraph 7)
8. a verb meaning *become a feature of something gradually without anyone noticing*
_____ (paragraph 8)
9. a noun meaning *the mental and physical condition of having no energy left*
_____ (paragraph 9)
10. a noun meaning *the speed with which a moving object keeps moving or moves faster*
_____ (paragraph 10)

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- 1 Weightlifters were the first sports people to use motivational speeches as they bench-pressed, but they have since become common in other sporting activities. You can find a lot of these speeches in online playlists so that you can listen at the gym or, if you're feeling tired, watch people screaming in the rain on your laptop. Tracks can feature solo speakers or snippets from several sources. Their voices are often uncredited, though ministers, athletes and business leaders feature heavily. Usually, the voices are accompanied by dramatic music.
- 2 When it comes to motivation, I need encouragement – if someone says “great job”, that makes me feel good – but, after a few months of overindulging, I need a strict teacher. I do usually take my workouts seriously (I do Thai boxing and I compete in amateur bodybuilding), so I've been listening to Don't You Dare Give Up On Yourself from Gold Coast company Fearless Motivation
- 3 Fearless Motivation was founded in 2015, when such tracks started to move beyond bodybuilding circles. Back then, Arnold Schwarzenegger was a popular choice. Now, big players have millions of subscribers, while Fearless Motivation claims its tracks have been streamed 500m times on Spotify. In addition to gymfluencers, motivational speech creators now aim their sights at students and wannabe entrepreneurs.
- 4 The basic theme is always: you're the underdog. Nobody knows how much you've suffered. Nobody cares, either. So now you need to dominate.
- 5 My friend Eilish Kidd, a kettlebell sport athlete, loved this genre a few years ago. “I was using these soundtracks to retreat,” she says. She stopped listening after deciding these speeches were making her antisocial. “It created an even stronger sense of isolation. Now I had something going through my head that other people couldn't hear: ‘You're not the average person. You are stronger and more powerful.’
- 6 “I think it appealed to me initially because it's that lone wolf kind of thing. It gives you the licence to be by yourself and different from everybody else.”
- 7 I skip a Jordan Peterson track and land on Tom Bilyeu. He's the mega-rich founder of Impact Theory, a motivational media company, but he doesn't hold a commanding presence in my ears – the better tracks build in intensity in the manner of Eminem's classic song Lose Yourself. In any case, being told by Bilyeu that I can't be in a successful relationship if I haven't read books on the differences between men and women seems counterintuitive to moving up to a heavier kettlebell weight.
- 8 There's a selfishness that this genre celebrates. We're living in an era that celebrates negative types of personality, and that's crossed over into self-improvement. Ten years after the original interest, people like Andrew Tate and Russell Brand have infiltrated the genre, with their interviews and podcasts becoming source material.
- 9 While these speeches offer tough love, following their advice exactly would probably lead to burnout or injury. But I find the perfect balance with the ultra-alpha The Wolf King Speech. It's a 20-minute male/female double-header that spends less time trying to guess my history and more on convincing me I'm one of a kind.
- 10 Just like these speeches, kettlebell workouts are all about momentum, so I decide to do as many violent swings as possible to finish up. I just hope nobody expects to get past me to the dumbbell rack any time soon.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Only weightlifters use motivational speeches when they are training.
2. Online playlists contain a lot of these motivational speeches.
3. They often contain music as well as words.
4. The author needs a strict teacher.
5. The people who create motivational speeches only make them for sports people.
6. Eilish Kidd thinks motivational speeches made her more friendly to other people.
7. Eilish says she dislikes being a lone wolf.
8. If you follow these speeches exactly, you could get injured or have no energy.

4 Key language

a. Match the words in column A with those in column B to make compound words in or relating to the text.

A	B
1. body	lifting
2. self-	track
3. weight	building
4. sound	improvement

b. Match the words from task A to the definitions below.

1. _____ the process of learning or doing new things to become a better person or professional
2. _____ the music accompanying the action in a film, TV programme, or speech
3. _____ an exercise consisting of lifting heavy objects repeatedly
4. _____ a sport in which the purpose is to make your muscles bigger and more defined

c. Write personalised sentences using the words from tasks A & B.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “Weightlifting is a waste of time and energy.”
- “Motivation is the most important part of any activity that people do.”

6 In your own words

a. Use a search engine to find information about some popular exercises that are beneficial to people’s health. Find information about these common forms of exercise or any other that you want to add to the list. Report your findings to the class.

- running
- weightlifting
- yoga
- gymnastics
- swimming
- rock climbing