

Red Gerard's Olympic Lessons On Adolescence And Resilience



By Jamie Wells, M.D. — February 14, 2018



By Korea.net / Korean Culture and Information Service ^[1]

In the era of overthinking everything with an excessive- often paralyzing - preoccupation with fear and perfection, it is quite refreshing to hear 17-year-old gold medalist [Red Gerard tell](#) ^[2] late night television host Jimmy Kimmel about his state of mind for his winning snowboarding slopestyle run on competition day at the Pyeongchang Olympic Winter Games (see video [here](#) ^[3]):

“Yeah [it was] really relaxed,” he said. “I’m pretty good with nerves before contests. I try to treat it like any other day.”

This is also after he overslept from staying up late watching Netflix, had to be awakened by his roommate who also ultimately had to provide him with his oversized jacket because Gerard couldn't locate his own after a fruitless search. With the coat “down at my thighs,” he went on “it was a really hectic morning.”

[Describing the day](#) ^[2] as turning out to be “pretty chill,” his response when asked by Kimmel about whether the Olympics might mean more for a 40-year-old than a 17-year-old he responded “for sure” and

“I didn’t really, to be honest, grow up watching the Olympics. It was always Dew Tour, X-Games, U.S. Open and all that that I was watching....So I didn’t have as

much pressure coming into it and it was just another event.”

We could all learn a lot from this perspective when approaching how we prepare for or function in high stakes events. How many of us while in the middle of contention for such a once-in-a-lifetime milestone achievement as the Olympics would have the capacity to fly 13 hours to film in California only to return back to South Korea for another competition day?

Such is the unique gift of this particular individual, ever enhanced by adolescence. Hence, the lack of filter when he accidentally cursed on live television after his victorious run - which catapulted him as a media sensation:



New York Magazine  @NYMag · Feb 13 

Red Gerard fell asleep watching [#BrooklynNineNine](#) on Netflix, overslept, then won Olympic gold



Cool Teen Red Gerard Overslept Before Winning Olympic Gold
thecut.com



VICE  @VICE · Feb 12



Red Gerard has had one hell of an Olympics.



This Teen Overslept After a Late Night of Netflix and Still Won Olympic Gold

[vice.com](https://www.vice.com)

This stage of human development enables navel gazing, the testing of limits and a continued drive for independence. Love and passion is intensified with a deeper capacity. Teenagers often feel invincible and empowered, especially with what adults might consider more unimaginable, even impossible dreams. They are more concrete than abstract in their thought processes, especially when under stress.

As we start to appreciate every shade of gray in our maturation toward adulthood, we garner a deeper understanding of our own mortality as opposed to the immortality our younger selves envision. Though this brings with it a vibrant and rich life, it routinely is accompanied by a new focus on fears, not the fearlessness of our teen years.

If you have the chance, then I recommend [watching](#) ^[3] some interviews with Red Gerard. It is abundantly clear he genuinely loves his sport and this is what drives him. It is quite simple, but the furthest thing from simplistic. You will smile and will be left with the realization that his pursuits are motivated by this pure passion for the game.

It's not all so complicated as we make it as we age. I recall in college oversleeping for my Italian final. A friend woke me up, thankfully, as I nearly fell out of the top bunk then ran to the exam in my pajamas. It wasn't all that complex in my decision-making. My GPA mattered since I knew I wanted to go to medical school and my two year language requirement played a meaningful role, so it was work it out and do your best or squander your chances. The latter never registered and I

had done the preparation.

Since technically - due to brain chemistry and the like - adolescence continues into your mid-twenties, I was not missing my pediatric Board-certifying examination over fever and a raging sinusitis. After all, it was only offered once a year, was very expensive and a requirement to work. So, my mouth-breathing, sleep-deprived in pain self took and passed that torturous two day nightmare because the alternative was unacceptable.

As life often seems to get more convoluted and perplexing, Red Gerard and many of the athletes in the Olympics offer important reminders that resilience is not thriving when things are perfect. Gerard was in last place, the pressure of best in three in his sport kept his head down and focused on the task at hand. Not his future or his past. Just the present moment.

According to [ABC News](#) [4], when asked by IOC President Thomas Bach "What were you thinking during all those spins?" Gerard replied, "I just want to land a run, that's about it."

His response paid dividends in gold - and even more in self-reliance and confidence. Consider this the next time you get stifled by your own indecision or endless considerations. I will.

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Links

[1] <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=62624635>

[2] <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/olympic-gold-medalist-red-gerard-recalls-hectic-morning/story?id=53070408>

[3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSKPdXi73ro>

[4] <http://abcnews.go.com/Sports/wireStory/gerard-takes-gold-mens-slopestyle-snowboarding-52993320>