

Freshmen on the Stanford gymnastics team going through this process of insight, awareness, and disillusion, would sometimes feel frustrated and tell me, their coach, how they "used to be better in high school" and how they were "going downhill."

This concerned me—until I saw films of them from the year before, and it was obvious that they had improved radically. They had simply raised their standards and were more aware of errors than they were the previous year.

*One sure sign of growing awareness is that you feel as if you are "getting worse."* Awareness in sport, in relationships, in any learning often entails a momentary drop in self-esteem, a dent in our self-image. Because of built-in defense mechanisms, therefore, most of us have a tendency to resist awareness.

It is important to understand and account for this internal resistance to awareness so that you can avoid the discouragement and frustration that has caused some athletes to quit a sport just when they are beginning to become proficient because they imagine that they are "getting worse."