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# Three Reasons Triathletes Need to Ditch Data and Train By Feel (/articles/2023/4/29/three-reasons-triathletes-need-to-ditch-data-and-train-by-feel)

Guest Contributor (/articles?author=5bb3e5f8104c7b401473177e)

*By Derek Stone*

Triathletes often rely on heart rate, power output, and pace data to measure their training progress and plan their workouts. While such data can be helpful, it's essential for athletes also to learn how to train by "feel." This means tuning in to their body's signals and adjusting their effort level accordingly, rather than relying solely on predetermined numbers. Here are three reasons why triathletes should learn to train by feel.

## #1: TRAINING BY FEEL BUILDS CONFIDENCE

When athletes learn to tune in to their body's signals and adjust their effort level based on how they feel, they develop a deeper understanding of their own physical capabilities. This understanding breeds confidence and empowers athletes, making them feel more in control of their training and performance. Instead of relying solely on external data or numbers, athletes can tap into their own internal sense of effort and pacing to push themselves to new fitness and performance levels. They aren't limited or intimidated by "what the numbers say." They trust their instincts and can reach new heights.

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## #2: TRAINING BY FEEL PROMOTES SELF-AWARENESS AND ADAPTABILITY DURING RACES

As athletes become more attuned to their body's signals, they may find that they can intuitively gauge their effort level without relying on data. This ability can be especially helpful in race situations, where external factors such as wind, hills, or heat may make it difficult to hit predetermined numbers. During a race, it's important for triathletes to be prepared for the unexpected. While data such as heart rate, power, and pace can be helpful during training and even on race day, many factors can impact the accuracy and availability of this data during a race. For example, a triathlete's watch or power meter may run out of battery mid-race, leaving them without their usual data to rely on. Similarly, external factors such as wind, hills, and weather can make it difficult to hit predetermined numbers, even if the athlete is well-trained. This is where the importance of training by feel comes into play. By developing an intuitive understanding of their body's signals and effort levels during training, triathletes can better gauge their effort level during a race, even if they don't have access to their usual data.

## #3: IT ENCOURAGES FLEXIBILITY

Relying too heavily on data and hitting numbers can make it difficult for athletes to listen to their bodies and adjust workouts on the fly. By learning to train by feel, triathletes can be more flexible and responsive to their body's needs, making it easier to adapt to changing conditions or unexpected challenges that require more recovery. It's important for triathletes to understand that stress can come from many sources, including work, family, and personal life, and that this stress can impact their workouts. When an athlete is under significant stress, their body may be less able to tolerate the same level of physical activity that it could when stress levels are lower. This means that workouts may feel more challenging than usual, even if the athlete is hitting their

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usual numbers. Additionally, stress can impact an athlete's recovery time, making it more difficult for them to bounce back after a hard workout. If an athlete is dealing with high stress levels, it may be necessary to adjust their workout schedule or intensity to avoid overtraining or injury. Listening to one's body is essential for identifying periods when training needs to be scaled.

## CONCLUSION

By developing the ability to train by feel, triathletes can become more attuned to their body's signals and adjust their workouts accordingly to avoid burnout and maintain their long-term health and happiness. While data is a valuable tool, it is important for athletes to recognize that their bodies are not machines and that external stressors can impact their workouts and overall well-being. However, this does not mean that triathletes should completely disregard data such as heart rate, power, and pace. These metrics can still be useful for tracking progress and planning workouts. However, training by feel can enhance athletes' intuitive understanding of their bodies and lead to improved performance and enjoyment of the sport.

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