

## *Overcoming the* **Wall**

Images of the 2012 Summer Olympics in London are still fresh in our minds. No doubt, all Americans are proud of our athletes who turned in such remarkable performances to lead in the medal count among all countries.

Coincidentally, I read a story by Peter Jensen in *The Winning Factor: Inspire Gold-Medal Performances in Your Employees* that is instructive for us in Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home.

A young swimmer hoped to qualify for the national team and compete for her country in the Olympics. Months before the trials were set to take place, her parents and coach noticed a lack of progress in her performance. They attributed her decline to the onset of puberty and her growing desire to spend more time with her friends. Observations soon turned to criticisms about her not taking her training seriously, and the young woman's training started to regress.

After she worked with a sports psychologist, it became clear that it wasn't laziness, lack of enthusiasm, physical changes, or even the want of a social life that was affecting the swimmer's performance. The young athlete had simply encountered the proverbial wall that affects so many in competitive sports.

But how did that wall get there in the first place? The answer to that question is something that all of us are familiar with – doubt.

With the Olympics less than a year away, the young athlete began to doubt her ability to compete at that level. Doubt led to a regression in her performance that was reinforced by the negative opinions others had about her skill and further contributed to her lack of confidence.

Because success is the one thing that can erase doubt, the swimmer was asked to get a mental picture of the wall preventing her from making progress. Through guided imagery, she was finally able to see herself climbing to the top of that wall, jumping down, and leaving it behind. This exercise not only helped her silence the negative thoughts she had of not being good enough, it also made it possible for her to picture herself training hard to compete in the Olympics.

What about you? Is there a wall blocking your best performance? It's easy for doubt to creep into our personal and professional lives. The cause may be grief over the loss of a loved one, a broken relationship, an illness, or even fatigue.

Determining how that wall got there and the commitment to overcome it can involve guided imagery: see yourself climbing it, jumping down and leaving it behind.

Eddie Robinson, the head coach at Grambling State University from 1941 to 1997 and the winningest coach in NCAA Division I football, said: "The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential ... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence."