

OLYMPIC strength

What we learned from the 2026 athletes

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Now that we've had a breather from the constant sports coverage, this is the perfect time to reflect on what we learned from this year's Olympians ... and what we can apply moving forward.

The athletes of the 2026 Winter Olympics didn't just deliver incredible performances – they showed what it really takes to pursue something at the highest level. Beyond the medals and highlight reels, their experiences revealed a few powerful, very human lessons about mindset, patience, and purpose.

Mental strength is just as important as physical strength

One of the biggest takeaways from watching Olympic athletes is that success isn't just about speed, power, or technique. It's about what's happening in your head. The pressure at the Olympics is intense, and even the most talented athletes can struggle under the weight of expectations. Those who performed at their best showed an ability to stay calm, refocus after mistakes, and trust their training.

It's a reminder that mental resilience isn't something you're born with – it's something you build. Confidence, emotional control, and the ability to bounce back from setbacks are skills, just like strength or endurance.

Progress takes time – and consistency wins

Another clear lesson from these Games was that success rarely happens overnight. Many of the athletes competing have spent years, sometimes decades, working toward this moment. Their journeys included injuries, losses, plateaus, and moments where quitting probably felt easier than continuing.

Veteran competitors especially showed how experience and patience can be huge advantages. They understand their bodies, their routines, and how to handle the emotional highs and lows of competition. The message is sim-

ple but powerful: staying consistent over time often matters more than flashes of talent. Showing up, putting in the work, and trusting the long process is what ultimately creates elite performance.

Purpose fuels performance

What stood out most wasn't just how athletes performed – it was why they competed. Many carried stories of personal struggle, national pride, family support, or a desire to represent something bigger than themselves. That deeper purpose gave meaning to every early morning workout and every sacrifice along the way.

You could see it in the emotion after races, in the tears after finishes, and in the pride of simply being there. For many, the Olympics weren't just about winning; they were about proving something to themselves, honoring their journey, and inspiring others watching at home. That sense of purpose often became the extra

push that carried them through tough moments.

In the end, the athletes of the 2026 Winter Olympics reminded us that greatness isn't just about standing on a podium. It's about resilience, long-term commitment, and having a reason to keep going when things get hard.

Well done Olympians and thank you.

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ABOVE: Kelly Pannek of Team United States celebrates winning the gold medals after the team's 2-1 overtime victory in the Women's Gold Medal match between the United States and Canada during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic games. MAJA HITIJ/GETTY IMAGES



Study finds 'hasslers' may be aging you faster

Sara Moniuszko
USA TODAY

People who make your life more difficult may be aging you faster, according to recent research.

In the study, published last month in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, researchers found that people with more hasslers in their life, or those "who create problems or make life more difficult," have a higher biological age compared to their actual chronological age.

"These results suggest that the hasslers in one's social environment may constitute an overlooked but consequential biological risk factor," the authors write.

The study even accounted for several other factors, including occupation, adverse childhood experiences and smoking. But still, the impact of negative social ties remained significant, the study notes.

Just how significant?

"Each additional hassler is associated with approximately 1.5% faster bio-

logical aging and roughly nine (months) of additional biological age among individuals of the same chronological age," the authors found.

But not all hasslers were the same. Family and friend hasslers showed "detrimental associations," whereas spouse hasslers did not.

And biological aging wasn't the only impact. Hasslers were also associated with multiple adverse mental and physical health outcomes like depression, anxiety and higher body mass index.

"These findings together highlight the critical role of negative social ties in biological aging as chronic stressors and the need for interventions that reduce harmful social exposures to promote healthier aging trajectories," the authors added.

The authors note, however, that the findings are associations and do not prove the "causal effect of negative social ties on aging processes."

Moreover, there's no single definition of biological age and no definitive research to prove faster biological aging results in early death.



A new study has found that people who make your life more difficult may be affecting your aging process. NOKO LTD, GETTY IMAGES