With sports and having autism it is hard. Having autism, participating in sports both as a participant and coach alongside doing a university degree in sport psychology and coaching sounds impossible. I can tell you that it is possible. There will be setbacks, challenges, good times and bad times. Having to fight every day when people say they will help you yet turn you away when you then ask for it.

I am here to share this because I am at the end of my university degree. The good days and moments where achievements are made; to the days that are not so good and moments of feeling heartbreak and crumbling down to the ground. Sharing how my dissertation for my degree was done over 1 academic year in my final year. The impact of what happened emotionally, thought processes and the final outcome on my first formal submission and next steps.

In the start I was excited and positive about the dissertation. I looked at as many different options I could do from doing a 6000 words plus a video recorded chat to just doing a full 8000 words. I went with 8000 words because I have a hard time with verbal communication which is one of many symptoms of my Functional Neurological Disorder. I know what I want to say but my brain holds the signals back to prevent me from speaking. I do have this impact as well on non-verbal communication and it's the same again. I want to communicate but sometimes my FND will make it harder. With this in mind I decided to do a 8000 word dissertation as a systematic review.

In the 3 months before it was due to be handed in I would put hours and hours into making sure that it was the highest standards possible. I would commit all my time where I had nothing else going on alongside excusing myself from instructor training because at the end of the day £9,250 is what I paid for each academic year. (At the time of this article its June 2022). At the time I was happy to apply to student finance England for this loan to study but I will be honest the quality that places make out to have is not there I have found. I do not blame student finance England for the quality received in teaching and assignments.

I failed my dissertation. I now have a second attempt with the grade capped at 40%. I was angry with it at first and also emotionally destroyed by all that happened. About 20 minutes later I managed to work through this and work through each stage and emotion progressively; offering me the knowledge of what I can do and how responding in anger and blaming others will get me no where. I did question if there was any point trying to sort things out to aid me in moving forwards.

Several days later I had a very different view on how to approach the task and how to tackle it. I have a plan in place, the determination to do all I am able to and pass my dissertation. Recognising that I can focus on the negativity if I want to however it is of no benefit to me. Reminding me that I can work with what I have and not allow anyone to say otherwise because I am strong. I have rebounded back now and become more determined than ever. I remind myself of everything I have faced in my time at university which is:

1. Failing my first year but going back with a fighting spirit
2. Concerns from my support team and security myself included on if I would make it safely hour by hour at times
3. Traumatic experiences whilst on public transport
4. Developing multiple food allergies in January of 2020
5. February 2020 with the loss of my great grand-mother
6. 23rd March 2020 when the United Kingdom went into lock down
7. 25th March approval was given for a small amount (no more than 10 people) could attend my great-grandmothers funeral
8. 27th March I broke down in tears before the funeral and before we could even leave at the end to go outside to her flowers I broke down again. During the funeral I read the eulogy which scared me at times but also encouraged me so much also knowing that I did what she asked for even if it also brought the father leading the service to tears also.
9. In the year 2021 I lost 24 people to suicide who were close friends and people I met whilst in a mental health unit in 2015.
10. Facing my final year where I was afraid to attend one module and was switched from after my mum who is my carer made it clear she did not feel that it was acceptable or safe for me to do this module.

I faced an extreme journey but now I am just as determined to pass my dissertation now and to prove that even with little support that if you believe you can achieve. No questions to be asked at all. I will write another article once I get the second attempt back but know I won't stop fighting because I can do it.