

# Saskia Sills: Riding the Waves of Success

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**We are delighted to showcase four-time Youth World Champion, 2019 Silver Medal RSX Series Champion, and Paris 2024 Olympics gold medal hopeful, Saskia Sills, as part of our Empower Hour series which highlights athletes who excelled despite adversity.**

Saskia has truly triumphed against the odds and managed difficult setbacks such as illness, injuries and the pressures of attending university while windsurfing competitively. We hope that Saskia's incredible journey and infallible positive attitude to life will help inspire you to strive for success in the face of any obstacles you may encounter.

## Set bite-size goals

It goes without saying that setting goals is an important part of the journey towards becoming a successful athlete, and Saskia's methods have been no different. Despite ups and downs in her career — such as illness, injuries and the impact of Covid-19 — she has managed to stay on track with her plans and keep her eye on the prize. She hasn't allowed setbacks to deter her plans for gold at the Paris 2024 Olympics and is working hard to make that dream a reality.

She says she does this by setting herself manageable targets that help her get to where she wants to be: "I think, to really stay motivated and true to your goals, you have to work from the very top of your big long-term goal and really work down to the tiny intricate details."



It can be easy to look at the bigger picture of what we want in life — professionally and personally — and become overwhelmed by the seemingly enormous leaps it may take to get there. According to Saskia, having long-term goals and breaking them up into manageable, bite-sized chunks, is a really clever way of giving your plans momentum without them becoming overpowering.

"Making my goals less overwhelming is making them so small that I can literally day by day, tick off successes and celebrate the small wins," she says, noting that "the key to a good goal is to a hundred percent believe in it and a hundred percent know why you want to achieve that goal."

As well as being a champion athlete, Saskia is also a champion for sustainability, as an ambassador for The Big Plastic Pledge. The global movement allows anyone to sign up to various big or small plastic pledges, helping affect change on a personal level, which ultimately leads to a global transformation. This is another way that seemingly small actions can result in a big impact, according to Saskia.

## Maintain a positive mindset to overcome setbacks

When Saskia turned 17, she was diagnosed with Celiac disease — a serious autoimmune condition, where the consumption of gluten can lead to damage in the small intestine. This led to her stepping back and making some difficult transitions in her life. Because the disease took a toll on her strength, she had to take a year off training and competing, which impacted the trajectory of her athletic plans. As well as this, aged 20 Saskia had compartment syndrome surgery in both forearms — an injury that can occur from overuse — and she also recently suffered from both glandular fever and chronic fatigue.

Despite the physical impact of such strenuous toll on her physical health, Saskia kept a positive mindset and kept her motivation afloat by accepting her situation and adjusting her goals to work with her circumstance.



"The way that I keep motivated and keep going forward is to just move the goalpost. The track that you're on right now may not be the straight way to the top of the mountain, but there is still a road to the top of the mountain, you just have to kind of keep the top of the mountain your goal."

Recognising that we have autonomy over our own lives is a refreshing way to look at opportunities. We are in control when moving our goalposts and reaching the end target is something that can be achieved in a myriad of different ways, even if it means having to be flexible along our path. Sometimes you have to take a different route, and as Saskia says, "The quicker you can reframe your thinking, the quicker you can get back on track to the long-term goal."

**Hear Saskia's take on motivating yourself to reach your goals even when you don't feel up to it.**

[Listen here](#)

## Balance your priorities

As a passionate young athlete, Saskia was under an incredible amount of pressure to divide her time while studying Geography at Bournemouth University. She did this alongside training and competing, which she admits was a trying period in her life: "It was absolutely awful." Fortunately, the university allowed Saskia to split her final year over two years, so she was able to compete as well as study harmoniously, though this didn't come without its struggles.

"The way that I coped was by surrounding myself with people I trusted to help me, and I built this network of amazing, incredible people around me that really got me through university and sailing." There is no doubt that having a great support network can be invaluable to our mental wellbeing. During this current period of incredible uncertainty, it may feel as though we are being pulled in many different directions, but having a trusted ear to turn to can make all the difference.

**Listen to Saskia's tips on staying motivated in challenging times**

[Listen here](#)

## Find your underlying motivation



To keep herself motivated mentally and physically — even on the toughest of days — Saskia has learnt to listen to her mind and body while working with her own intuition to do what's best for her. Instead of forcing herself to train when she knows it won't be an effective session, she allows herself time to recoup. "Whether that's literally just taking some time out and seeing a friend, or calling mum and dad, or going for coffee somewhere nice," being kind to yourself plays an important part in reaching your goals. It can feel like we aren't working hard enough sometimes if we allow ourselves the chance to fully relax, but as Saskia has realised, we need to give ourselves a break sometimes to end up reaching our full potential. "You have the power to say, I'm going to do something different today."

As well as concentrating on her ascending career, Saskia (like most of us) is also motivated by the thought of returning to some kind of social normality. She is now looking forward to seeing friends and celebrating milestones like weddings and birthdays: "I think what I'm looking forward to the most is normal life resuming." And it's a statement most would agree with.