

JS Mental Performance

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Mental Skills Training for Coaches and Athletes

MENTAL SKILLS TRAINING

What are Mental Skills?

- **Mental skills** are internal capabilities that help athletes control their minds efficiently and consistently as they execute sport-related goals.
 - Mental skills training provides the methods and techniques to not only develop skills such as concentration and positive body language, but also to foster personal characteristics such as self-esteem and positive competitive skills and behaviors.
- Mental Skills are NOT something that you do or do not have
 - Some people find certain skills easier or that they come more naturally, but all skills can be taught and must continually be worked on to maximize their effectiveness

Why are Mental Skills Important?

- Mental skills techniques help athletes adjust their actions, thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations in order to improve their games.
- Mental skills techniques do this by helping the player to:
 - Develop self-confidence
 - Set goals and create a positive long-term vision
 - Use imagery and visualization to work on competitive skills
 - Focus concentration and attention
 - Deal with adversity and Improve error management
 - Develop a positive approach to competition

Five Key Mental Skills to Develop in Athletes

Positive and Growth Oriented Mindset

- Mindsets are the assumptions and expectations we have for ourselves and others.
 - These attitudes guide our behavior and influence our responses to daily events.
- People who hold a growth mindset believe that they are always learning, always able to improve upon their current abilities to improve their performance in various settings.
 - Focusing on the Process over the Outcome.
- Positive thinkers see obstacles as a challenge and an opportunity to improve themselves.
 - They believe in themselves and the people around them and use that energy to face any challenge.

Resilience

- Resilience refers to the ability of an individual, group, or system to successfully adapt to difficult or challenging life experiences
 - Having the mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and ability to adjust to both internal and external demands
- Resilience has two parts:
 - The Process and The Outcome
- Some Key Themes of Resilience
 1. Developing a Positive Attitude
 2. Focus on Personal Development
 3. View Setbacks as Opportunities for Growth
 4. Build up your confidence from a range of sources
 5. Take Responsibility for your Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours
 6. Concentrate on what you can control

Anxiety/Emotion Management

- Anxiety is a normal and healthy reaction to a perceived danger that triggers a variety of physical, mental, and behavioral changes
 - These changes occur to facilitate a speedy response to the perceived threat
- However, while anxiety is a normal experience, that does not mean that it is always helpful!

Pros and Cons of Anxiety

- Benefits
 - Low to moderate anxiety can increase physical arousal, increasing our alertness, task-focus, and motivation
- Cons
 - Anxiety that lasts for too long creates physical exhaustion
 - Excessive anxiety can lead to a narrowed focus, less awareness, reduced cognitive ability, more incorrect cognitive judgements of the self and increasing alertness to threatening cues

Communication

- Communication is more than just what you say
 - Also involves how you say something, your body language, behaviour and more
- Often the way a message is relayed is interpreted as being more important than the message itself

Listening

- One of the most overlooked aspects of Communication!!!!
 - It does not matter what you are saying if the message is not being received.
 - It is crucial to listen attentively and value others' opinions

Goal-Setting

- Why is Goal-Setting important for Performance?
 - Goal setting can improve performance, influence motivation, and help athletes reach their potential
- Helps athletes become aware of their current performance levels and develop specific, detailed plans for attaining their goals.
 - Influence motivation by providing short-term tangible targets on a path to long-term goals
- There can be drawbacks to goal setting
 - Setting ineffective or the wrong types of goals can reduce confidence, motivation and increase the chances athletes can fail before they even start
 - With proper education and support, the benefits however can greatly outweigh these risks

BACKGROUND AND SERVICES OFFERED

About Me: I completed my MSc in Sport and Exercise Psychology at the University of Thessaly in Greece. During my time in Greece I worked extensively with several elite adult and youth soccer teams, including several athletes competing on both the Junior and Senior Greek National Teams. Since returning to Calgary I have worked with athletes and teams in a variety of sports including skiing, volleyball, and baseball. My passion for assisting athletes, coaches, and parents in the development and strengthening of their mental skills stems from my own experiences as both a coach and player involved in elite youth sports including hockey, volleyball, golf, lacrosse and more.

Services Offered:

- 1-on-1 Mental Performance Coaching
 - Focus on the identification and development of mental skills that improve performance.
 - Sessions range from 60-90 minutes in length depending on the individuals needs
- Custom Team Packages
 - Group or team sessions are available to assess and improve the effectiveness of the team's performance as a whole. Team sessions will generally include work on team cohesion, acceptance, communication, and effective goal-setting, but can be customized depending on the team's needs
- Example Mental Training Programs include:
 - Mindfulness, Acceptance and Commitment (MAC),
 - Anxiety Management and Resilience Development
 - Goal-Setting, Mental Imagery, Self-Talk, and Leadership Training