



PROGRAM SUPPORT NOTES

Sports Psychology: Mental Preparation

Program Support Notes by:
Jo Basnett Bachelor Education
(Human Movement and Health)

Produced by:
VEA Pty Ltd

Commissioning Editor:
Sandra Frerichs B.Ed, M.Ed.

Executive Producers:
Edwina Baden-Powell B.A, CVP.
Sandra Frerichs B.Ed, M.Ed.

© Video Education Australasia Pty Ltd 2012

Reproducing these support notes

You may download and print one copy of these support notes from our website for your reference. Further copying or printing must be reported to CAL as per the *Copyright Act 1968*.

For Teachers

Introduction

Fear of failure and 'choking' when it comes to the crunch, are all too common experiences among elite athletes. Athletes who under prepare psychologically for their event can maximize their effort and achieve optimal performance. Accomplished athletes are able to draw on strategies such as concentration skills, mental rehearsal, mental imagery, visualization and goal setting to ensure their mental and physical energy is channeled in the right direction to lead to the desired result. These strategies require persistence, patience and practice throughout training sessions and past experiences to ensure the desired outcome on competition day.

Timeline

00:00:00 Concentration
00:05:20 Visualization and imagery
00:08:36 Mental rehearsal
00:13:03 Goals and feedback
00:16:45 Credits
00:17:34 End program

Related Titles

Sports Psychology: Motivation, Anxiety and Arousal
Nutrition and Hydration in Sports
Performance Enhancing Substances in Sport

Recommended Resources

<http://www.brianmac.co.uk/psych.htm>
<http://www.mindtools.com/page11.html>
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/ais/sssm/psychology>
<http://www.vu.edu.au/units/ahe1206>

Student Worksheet

Initiate Prior Learning

1. Why do you think 'motivated to succeed' is better than 'motivated to avoid failure'?

2. Why do you think athlete's use 'self talk'?

3. Why is it important for athletes to set specific goals during their training?

4. Why is it important for athletes to focus on positives instead of negatives?

5. Suggest some ways athletes might manage anxiety.

Sports Psychology: Mental Preparation

6. Suggest some tactics athletes might use to avoid a 'fear of failure' mentality.

7. Why should athletes focus on the journey or process, instead of the outcome?

8. Explain a time when you have had to utilize any of the above psychological strategies before a major event (sporting, social, an exam, etc.). How did you control your level of anxiety? Was it successful? Why? Why not?

Active Viewing Guide

Concentration

1. What can happen when mistakes are made?

2. What is 'being in the zone' compared to 'staying in the zone'?

3. What does Tim Matthews (Paralympics' coach) suggest can undermine his advice?

4. Why do you think it is an equal amount of mental vs. physical preparation for endurance athletes?

5. What are some of the questions Brad Conder asks himself prior to race day?

Sports Psychology: Mental Preparation

6. Why is 'hoping' to win not enough?

Visualization and imagery

7. Finish this sentence: 'Pictures in our mind create.....'

8. How do Kelly Cartwright and Rowena Webster use visualization?

9. What does Anna Gelai give as one outcome of positive visualization?

Mental rehearsal

10. Explain why optimal physical preparation is not enough at an elite level?

11. Give two examples of how mental rehearsal can help an athlete.

Sports Psychology: Mental Preparation

12. Why is mental rehearsal important in diving?

13. Give one example of how athletes can block out negative thoughts.

Goals and feedback

14. What is the benefit to an athlete of reflecting on performance, especially mistakes?

15. What does SMARTER stand for when discussing goals?

16. What person is in the best position to provide feedback?

Extension Activities

1. Explain in your own words how important sports psychology has become and why.
2. Predict why athletes 'choke' in the heat of the moment despite effective physical and psychological preparation
3. Select an elite athlete of your choice. Research the psychological preparation they undertake before and immediately prior to competition. Present your findings to the class in an oral presentation.
4. What is the difference in physical and psychological preparation between a beginner and an elite athlete? Justify your answer with relevant examples.
5. Class Debate. 'Psychological preparation is more important than physical preparation'

Suggested Student Responses

Initiate Prior Learning

1. Why do you think 'motivated to succeed' is better than 'motivated to avoid failure'?
The individual who is motivated to succeed will see any setback as a stepping stone to success.
2. Why do you think athletes use 'self talk'?
To reinforce both positive and negative thoughts.
3. Why is it important for athletes to set specific goals during their training?
A sense of life direction is crucial to self worth and that their efforts need to be targeted and concentrated. They need to think about week-by-week, day-by-day, even hour-by-hour things that they need to do to get them there. It's about stringing together a series of smaller triumphs that add up.
4. Why is it important for athletes to focus on positives instead of negatives?
They need to focus on things they've done well because if they focus on the negatives, they have little fuel to get up and keep going.
5. Suggest some ways athletes might manage anxiety.
**Diverting their attention.
Centered breathing.
Focus on what they are doing now, not what they are about to do.**
6. Suggest some tactics athletes might use to avoid a 'fear of failure' mentality.
**Rather than undergoing the pain of dealing with failure athletes need to train themselves not to be afraid of it in the first place.
Focus on being the best they can be, not the end result.**
7. Why should athletes focus on the journey or process, instead of the outcome?
Because that is something they can control. They don't have control of the outcome and/or a lot of things in life
8. Explain a time when you have had to utilize any of the above psychological strategies before a major event (sporting, social, an exam, etc.). How did you control your level of anxiety? Was it successful? Why? Why not?
Answers will vary

Active Viewing Guide

Concentration

1. What can happen when mistakes are made?
Answers will vary but may include: athlete focuses on the mistake – becomes the forefront of their mind instead of executing perfect routine
2. What is 'being in the zone' compared to 'staying in the zone'?
Performing at one's peak and maintaining peak performance despite fatigue, self doubt
3. What does Tim Matthews (Paralympics' coach) suggest can undermine his advice?
40 min window of seeing other athletes, when they might question belief in themselves and ability to win, other athletes might undermine their confidence, etc
4. Why do you think it is an equal amount of mental vs. physical preparation for endurance athletes?
Answers will vary but may include reference to the length of the event and the physical and mental challenges that poses.
5. What are some of the questions Brad Conder asks himself prior to race day?
**Can I do it?
What time will I do?
How much will it hurt?**
6. Why is 'hoping' to win not enough?
They need stronger belief instead of hope; a definitive, commanding attitude

Visualization and imagery

7. Finish this sentence: 'Pictures in our mind create.....'
Answers may vary slightly but may include: various physiological and neuromuscular responses in the body in a very purposeful and controlled way (from Paulette Mifsud)
8. How do Kelly Cartwright and Rowena Webster use visualization?
Answers will vary but may include: visualizing winning, visualizing good outcomes (good jump, run etc), visualizing certain situations prior to them occurring, and controlling the thoughts and emotions beforehand, i.e. parents in the grandstands at Olympics, televised etc – feel like she has been there before therefore is more of a comfort
9. What does Anna Gelai give as one outcome of positive visualization?
Answers will vary but may include increased concentration, added confidence

Mental rehearsal

10. Explain why optimal physical preparation is not enough at an elite level?
All athletes can be physically fit; however, their mental state can give them an advantage over their competitors.
11. Give two examples of how mental rehearsal can help an athlete.
Answers will vary but may include: learn new skills, gain confidence, experience success, control anxiety, find motivation, concentrate and refocus and develop coping strategies.

Sports Psychology: Mental Preparation

12. Why is mental rehearsal important in diving?

Due to the repetitive movements, routines are established and mental rehearsal ensures the athlete feels comfortable prior to competition, like they have been there before and won't falter in competition; the movements can be hardwired in the diver's brain

13. Give one example of how athletes can block out negative thoughts.

Answers will vary but may include: blocking it out through mental rehearsal at training; reframing the thought into something more positive

Goals and feedback

14. What is the benefit to an athlete of reflecting on performance, especially mistakes?

Answers will vary but may include: learning from mistakes, reflecting on the mental state that might have contributed to the performance.

15. What does SMARTER stand for when discussing goals?

**Specific
Measureable
Adjustable
Realistic
Time Based
Exciting
Recorded**

16. What person is in the best position to provide feedback?

Coaches or (where relevant) teammates