

Describe arousal,
anxiety and stress
including their causes
essay sample



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Arousal is the amount of mental energy or preparedness a person has prior to performance. Being aroused has different effects on the body and mind being aroused will make you feel mentally excited, have an increased pulse, blood pressure and temperature. Sweating is likely to occur as having butterflies in your stomach your focus will increase as you set yourself into the zone you are playing in. There are different levels of arousal under aroused, optimum arousal and over arousal.

Being under aroused gives you a slow RT your attention span and concentration goes broad and you have slow reaction and stimuli. Being over aroused will lead to being highly excited, having a decrease in motor control leading to poor execution of skills. Attention span becomes narrow giving tunnel vision and making poor decisions. Optimum arousal makes the athlete physically and mentally prepares for action, making them make good decision and execute skills accurately the athlete will also have a quick RT.

Optimum levels of arousal are affected by how difficult or intellectual a sport is, how much cognitive energy it requires, and how much endurance and persistence the sport/task needs. For example, the arousal levels in a Rugby team training session are likely to be higher because it requires persistence and perseverance. A training session is a low cognitive task, therefore arousal levels are going to be higher, and are likely to be more beneficial to long term performance. Performers become more intrinsically motivated and self-directed, as at training they are much more eager to learn and improve.

Whereas, a Golfer (putting) which is a high cognitive task, is likely to initiate lower arousal levels - where concentration is at its highest and decision

making is essential; so, as a result, the athlete is able to optimise his/her performance to that of the best possible, without becoming agitated in an effort to sink the ball. Drive theory According to the Drive Theory if an athlete is appropriately skilled then it will help them to perform well if their drive to compete is aroused - they are psyched up. As arousal increases, performance increases.

An example of this theory is when everyone was expecting Paula Radcliffe to win Gold at the Olympics. Because of vast pressure and media attention Paula Radcliffe receives she decided to train alone in the south of Spain instead of at the British team's training camp. Throughout her career she had won races by going to the front and trying to burn the opposition away, but in the Olympics race this didn't happen, her opponents stayed with and then started to go in front. She then began to lose confidence in herself and gave up around the 23 mile mark, falling to the wayside in tears having to be supported by fans.

After failing to achieve gold in the marathon Paula decided to go ahead with running the 10000m. Deciding to run the 10000m is seen as a big mistake by many, there was no way she was going to be able to run a full 10000m against people with fresh legs, having run 23 miles in the week followed by huge emotional trauma. Before the 10000m Paula's arousal levels would have been very high, thinking if she would finish or even get a podium finish, hence, according to the inverted 'u' theory, the fall in her performance was due to over arousal. Inverted 'U' theory

This theory states that as arousal levels increase so will the level of performance, but only to a certain optimal level of performance. Beyond the optimal level, performance will get worse if arousal levels increase. Anxiety

There are two forms of anxiety trait anxiety, state anxiety, somatic and cognitive Trait anxiety is a feature of personality. Person perceives non-dangerous circumstances as threatening and responds with state anxiety reaction. State anxiety: temporary ever changing emotional state with feelings of apprehension or tension. Anxiety can be caused by a number of determining factors.

Different athletes from different backgrounds life have different forms of anxiety. An athlete from a third world country may be competing in order to feed his family, this could put a great amount of pressure on the athlete to perform to the best of his ability, while athletes from more developed countries may be competing for the excitement of the sport. In the case of a runner anxiety and arousal can greatly affect performance. Before an event if a runner is getting anxious they will start showing some of the symptoms.

Somatic symptoms: * Increased blood pressure * Pounding heart * Increased respiratory rate * Sweating Increased adrenaline * Muscular tension * Feeling weak * Nausea Cognitive symptoms: * Feeling heavy * Negative thoughts * Poor concentration * Fear loss of confidence All of these reactions of anxiety can affect a performance, they will affect energy levels and lead to a decrease in energy levels and hydration, so it is important that an athlete is able to control their levels of anxiety or they risk not performing to their potential or being unable to finish a race. Stress Stress in sport is an

important factor for sportspeople to overcome because at times the competitions and matches can become too much for them.

Stress is known in a person when they form tension mentally and physically and have gone into a state of strain or suspense. Stress is anything that can cause a person react invariably, however each person responds differently to stress. There are many causes of stress within athletes. Such as injury, mental fatigue, when it is thought that what is being asked of an athlete is beyond their perceived abilities, when too much is asked of the athlete in too short a space of time when unnecessary obstacles are put in the way of achieving goals.

Some of these things are intrinsic and some possibly less are extrinsic. It is these factors, which cause most stress in elite athletes. There are two types of stress these are known as Eustress and Distress. Eustress is known as the better stress, the stress which provides us mental and physical energy which leads us in a direction to move forward and get things done. It also provides us with a sense of fulfilment and happiness when being challenged mentally or physically.

For a footballer Eustress can be felt in an international game when they are singing the national anthem with a stadium full of 70, 000 fans chanting it with them, this can provide the footballers great fulfilment knowing and having that feeling of all of those people behind them to do well. Eustress in footballers can be felt right throughout all levels when their team scores a goal, this provides all of the teams players a sense of direction and energy to

go on and win the game, this Eustress is necessary for footballers as this is what motivates players to win games the feeling of fulfilment.

Distress is known as the bad stress it can provide performers with a sense of discomfort, which can then lead to illnesses and even worse depression.

Distress is at the state when the performer or person has come to the point when they have too much stress, for a long period of time distress can seriously damage a person's health by causing coronary heart diseases, high blood pressure, ulcers, impotence, substance addiction, mental health problems even to the extent of suicidal tendencies.

Distress in football can seriously affect their confidence within the game and their performance however it does depend on the experience, the importance of the competition, the quality of the opposition and the size of the crowds. All of this can affect the footballer by causing them to "freeze" in the game, this is known as when a footballer avoids receiving the ball, dribbling the ball, striking the ball and just general interaction in play. This is because when footballers are stressed they do not have the motivation or fulfilment to perform or carry out the desired actions.

There are 3 different symptoms of stress, psychological, physiological and behavioural. Psychological responses to stress Psychological responses are caused by the athlete interpreting the stressor after recognising it, an example of this is when an individual is about to sit an important exam they will begin to get butterflies and feel nervous they then interpret exams as something they don't like or something which the individual is not good at and doesn't provide a positive feeling.

Symptoms for psychological responses to stress are: * Reduced concentration * Less interested * Unable to make decisions * Sleep disturbances. * Making mistakes * Unable to relax * Quick losses of temper * Loss of sense of humour * Loss of self-esteem * Loss of enthusiasm From an athlete's view, psychological responses to stress can be the most effective symptom on their game this is because if they relate a bad thought with their game they will find it difficult to carry out that activity positively.

An example is if a long distant runner had to compete at a competition where there were no supporters their wanting that individual to win, this individual will gain a negative vibe because usually they are used to having large amounts of supporters their chanting their name, however this time other competitors names are being chanted, psychologically the individual's concentration is automatically reduced because they begin to think about the supporters instead of their competition, this also may make them feel a lack of enthusiasm because they do not feel motivated enough to run because they have no one to cheer with them if they win.

Physiological Responses The physiological responses to stress relate to how an athlete reacts to stress, a common quote used is the "fight or flight" response. Symptoms of stress can be: * An increased heart rate * Faster breathing * Headaches * Butterflies in the stomach * Tightness of chest and pains. * Dry mouth. * Continuous colds and illnesses. Muscular aches and strains. * Persistent sweating. * Skin irritations or infections. For an athlete this could relate to them when they are entering an intensifying moment in their game such as a penalty kick; they will begin to sweat more, their heart rate increases, which increase blood pressure making muscles tense up.
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The players who choose not to take a penalty is because of their physiological response to this stress by choosing to walk away and not take a penalty, the players who choose to take a penalty are physiologically responding to the stress by opting to arise above the stress of taking a penalty, however they could still go through the symptoms of stress which may be the reason why some players miss scoring penalties. Behavioural symptoms

Behavioural responses to stress occur when an individual carries out actions to either make them feel like it is helping them cope with stress or makes them feel more relaxed and comfortable. Symptoms are: * Talking, eating and walking quickly * Interrupting conversations * Increased smoking, drinking and eating. * Fidgeting * Lethargy * Moodiness * Grudge bearing * Accidents and clumsiness * Poor personal presentation * Nervous habits

For an athlete they can carry out behavioural stress symptoms even within a game, for an example if a referee gives a unjustifiable penalty against a defender, this defender could become moody and angry towards the referee, and they even may bear a grudge against this referee for further matches, which will make the player even more stressed because before every game if the player knows that same referee if refereeing their game they are going to link it back to that incident.

Sports performers can even take up bad eating patterns whereby they are so stressed they cannot find the right time to eat, therefore they begin to lose muscle mass and weight and start to become lethargic and are unable to perform to their best ability.