

The place of mental preparation of athletes

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The sports community now recognizes that mental factors such as confidence, composure, focus, and motivation are highly significant to athletic performance. As a result, over the year's performance enhancement has become an emerging career track within the field of sport psychology. Sport psychology (or sports psychology) is the study of the psychological factors that affect participation and performance in sports.

Sport psychology professionals who focus on performance enhancement aim to increase athletic performance by minimizing the psychological effects of poor performance and instilling the mental skill needed to attain peak performance. In order for the field of sport psychology to advance, professionals must educate the sports community on the value and benefits of mental training. Psychology principles such as positive thinking, imagery, and goal setting can be applied in sports to help athletes perform and prepare for competition.

At the elite levels, all athletes have the talent and the physical tools to compete. In an interview with Hall of Quarterback and Sports Analyst Troy Aikman, he stated, "When you get to the elite level in sports, athletically, what separates the really great performers are the ones who are mentally tough and see things a little bit quicker than their competitors." These athletes have the ability to move on after mistakes, maintain confidence and composure in the face of adversity, and focus on what is needed to execute each task successfully.

The best practice to enhance athletic performance in the field of sport psychology is through mental training. Mental training is the segment of sports psychology that concentrates specifically on helping athletes break

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through the mental barriers that are keeping them from performing up to their peak potential. Many athletes and coaches resist mental training because they do not understand how it can help them. In order for athletes to get the most out of their sport, it is critical for them to understand the value of improving their mental game.

Athletes are more likely to embrace mental training when they understand it and its benefits. However, the best way for athletes to embrace into mental training is when they actually experience its power firsthand. Mental training is about improving one's attitude and mental skills to help them perform their best by identifying limiting beliefs and embracing a healthier philosophy about their sport. Mental skills, just like physical skills, take repetition, practice, and game-time application to develop.

Helping athletes and coaches understanding the mental barriers that limit performance and the benefits of sports psychology intervention is a critical step in the mental training process. Mental barriers include high expectations, perfectionism, fear of failure, lack of emotional control and attentional focus. Athletes can overcome these barriers through sport psychology intervention that aim to enhance confidence, focus, composure, trust and mental preparation. Most athletes are highly committed to excellence and seeing how far they can go in sports.

They love competition and testing themselves against the best in their sport. They understand the importance of a positive attitude and mental toughness. These athletes want every possible advantage they can get including the mental edge over the competition. Sports Psychology is about improving your attitude and mental toughness to help you perform your best

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by identifying limiting beliefs and embracing a healthier philosophy about your sport. Mental training is used by elite athletes to help improve focus, confidence and deal with distractions.

Many athletes have the ability to concentrate, but often their focus is displaced on the wrong areas such as when a batter thinks " I need to get a hit" while in the batter's box, which is a result-oriented focus. Sport Psychology Today is a sports mental training resource for athletes, sports parents, coaches, sport psychology scholars, and professionals provided by Mental Edge Athletics. Please sign up for our Discussion Forum to share your experiences, ask questions, and gain access to advice from our readers and team of experts around the world.

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Mental training is important for athletes, whether striving to do their personal best or competing against others. Mental imagery, what Bruce D. Hale of Penn State calls " No Sweat Practice," is very effective. The mind cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined. Practice is practice, regardless of whether it is mental or physical. Ask the athlete to sit in a relaxed position in a quiet place with few distractions. Tell
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the athlete to close their eyes and picture performing a particular skill. Each is seeing him/herself on a large movie screen on a football pitch.

Walk them through the skill step by step. Use as much detail as possible, using words to elicit all the senses — sight, hearing, touch and smell-soft foot, cushion, deep it close, toe down, light touches. Ask the athlete to repeat the image. Picture rehearsing the skill successfully, even to the point of seeing the ball going in the goal. Some athletes need help to start the process. Others will learn to practice this way on their own. The link between performing the skills in the mind and performing the skills on the football pitch may be hard to explain.

However, the athletes who repeatedly imagine themselves correctly completing a skill and believing it to be true are more likely to make it happen. Whatever goes into one's mind and one's heart comes out in their actions. " If you really want to do something, you'll find a way; if you don't, you'll find an excuse. " --Author Unknown " Desire is the starting point of all achievement, not a hope, not a wish, but a keen pulsating desire which transcends everything. " --Napoleon Hill " There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure. " --Colin Powell Effort only fully releases its reward after a person refuses to quit. " --Napoleon Hill " Winners are those people who make a habit of doing the things losers are uncomfortable doing. " --Ed Foreman " Every person who wins in any undertaking must be willing to cut all sources of retreat. Only by doing so can one be sure of maintaining that state of mind known as a burning desire to win--essential to success. " --Napoleon Hill " Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. " --

Albert Einstein " If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way. --Napoleon Hill " Only a strong tree can stand alone. " --Arnold Glasow " Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness. " --Napoleon Hill " The state of your life is nothing more than a reflection of your state of mind. " --Napoleon Hill " The state of your life is nothing more than a reflection of your state of mind. " --Dr. Wayne W. Dyer " It's a sure thing that you'll not finish if you don't start. " --Napoleon Hill " The individual with a negative mental attitude attracts troubles as a magnet attracts steel fittings. --Napoleon Hill " Our attitude is the primary force that will determine whether we succeed or fail. " --Dr. John C. Maxwell " The key to having a good attitude is the willingness to change. We are either the masters or the victims of our attitudes. It is a matter of personal choice. Who we are today is the result of choices we made yesterday. Tomorrow we will become what we choose today. To change means to choose to change. " -- Dr. John C. Maxwell " The ladder of success is never crowded at the top. " -- Napoleon Hill

PhotoCredit the athlete image by csaba fikker from Fotolia. om Physical training is only one facet of the training that successful athletes undergo. While the body is pushed to its limits and trained to perform under pressure for as long as necessary, the mind also must be prepared for competition. The world's best athletes all have techniques they use to win and achieve their goals. Function Sound mental training prepares athletes for competition by eliminating the anxiety that often surrounds performance. One of the main functions of mental athletic training is to help athletes concentrate on the moment.

Trainers at Mental Goaltending report that athletes must learn to concentrate on the positive and refuse to entertain negative thoughts. Types One type of mental training that many athletes use is called visualization. Athletes are urged to see themselves performing at their peak and crossing the finish line or making a goal or basket. Visualization is designed to infuse the subconscious mind with a reality developed by the athlete so that the conscious mind follows through and makes it happen. Benefits In addition to providing competitive athletes with an edge, mental training can help relieve some of the stress involved in competition.

Sports psychologists at Protex Sports report that in addition to the pressure of the competition, athletes face stress and pressure from managers, coaches, teammates and fans. They often face rigorous schedules and family demands that create additional stress that could affect their performance. Mental training is meant to alleviate some of the stress. Features A thorough mental training program features work in a range of areas that affect performance. Athletes look to psychological trainers to help them improve their mental toughness to withstand the demands of the competition as well as help them focus on their priorities.

They work to uncover any fears that might be standing in the way of success and find ways to address those fears. Through mental training, athletes can gain confidence and composure. Considerations After an injury, many athletes have a difficult time adjusting to not playing their sport and facing a possible end to their athletic careers. Mental training for athletic success includes considerations for those times. During rehabilitation or preparing to

retire, athletes have special needs that can be addressed through specially trained therapists.