



Sport Psychology Tools and Techniques

Goals

Benjamin Franklin is credited with saying, “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail”.

Successful athletes use goals to propel themselves to higher performance levels. Meanwhile, achievement goals motivate an individual toward behavioral purpose and persistence.

Motivation

There are two types of motivation: Extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation drives athletes who desire accolades, while intrinsic motivation comes about through personal achievements like reaching a personal best time or number of points scored. Every person is not alike and requires different types of motivation. Additionally, coaches often mistake “loud” for “leadership”. Therefore, it is important for coaches to understand athletes are not motivated strictly by fear and the same style does motivate every player.

Mindfulness

This technique is often associated with meditation to attain a tranquil state and simultaneously enable a person to be fully aware of their surroundings. Individuals who use this relaxation approach do not allow themselves to be overcome by situational emotions, but patiently work through the current moment. Athletes can utilize mindfulness by practicing imagery, visualization, and breathing techniques which provide pathways to stress reduction and body relaxation.

Breathing

This normal bodily function is taken for granted; however, stress arousal affects breathing and performance. When the body is stressed, breathing becomes shallower and erratic. Sport psychology teaches individuals to take slow, rhythmic, and timed breaths. This process enhances the body's autonomic responses and is psychologically influential to alleviating stress.

Self-talk

As a spectator, you may have witnessed an athlete talking to themselves when they are standing at the foul line on a basketball court. They are not crazy. They are focusing their attention on making the foul shot by providing themselves with positive feedback. Creating positive thoughts overshadows negative thinking and improves self-confidence.

Imagery

This technique is designed for athletes to use all senses. This includes utilizing gustatory, optical, olfactory, auditory, and kinesthetic images to reach optimal performance levels. These tools are utilized to enhance training and practice sessions; compete more effectively; accelerate skills progression; stay motivated; and continue athletic form when injured.

Hypnosis

During stressful moments, athletes may remember the last time they missed a layup or struck out with bases loaded. Hypnosis is a highly effective technique for providing an alternative state of consciousness which relaxes the mind. Submitting to the hypnotist's suggestions enhances a person's ability to prepare for optimal performance levels versus remembering the last failure. The suggestible state enables the subconscious mind to be open for post-hypnotic suggestions. Hypnosis is a great tool for helping people focus on the positive aspects of sport and life, as well as clearing those events which cause mental turmoil.