

Sport & Performance Psychology – Fundamental Components

Applied Sport & Performance Psychology includes the development of an array of mental training techniques that have been used successfully by athletes, performers and coaches to improve performance. Areas for psychological skills training:

- **Goal Setting**

Goals need to be performance based, specific, realistic, measurable, and limited in number. They can be broken down as annual/season, monthly, weekly, and daily.

- **Focus & Concentration**

These skills help block out external distractions. One definition is: “The ability to think about nothing.” Cue words channel energy and focus during practice and competition (“Soar”, “Push”, “Drive”, “Glide”). Refocusing words are single words or short phrases that athletes and performers use to re-set or bring themselves back into balance and focus after an error or bad break (“Balance”, “Tempo”, “Relax and breathe”, “Trust yourself”). These words and phrases are used mentally and should be created by the athletes. Focus is also aided by regular, meaningful pre-event routines.

- **Arousal & Relaxation Control**

This skill involves finding the zone of optimal arousal and being able to regulate it as necessary and developing relaxation control using controlled breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.

- **Visualization & Imagery**

These techniques involve internal and external visualization. Both visualization and imagery must be very detailed. Integrate physical practice with mental practice. Physical skills and techniques must be sound for mental practice to be most effective.

- **Self-Talk & Positive Affirmations**

This skill transforms our intangible thoughts into something firm. Like cue and refocusing words, these are repeated mentally and should be created by the athletes themselves (“I will be successful because_____”, “I really enjoy playing_____”, “I am in perfect balance”, “My rhythm is perfect”).