



# MENTAL SKILLS TRAINING CURRICULUM

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1.) Athletic Identity
- 2.) Routines and Pre-Performance Preparation
- 3.) Self-Talk
- 4.) Goal Setting and Goal Implementation
- 5.) Mental Toughness
- + 6.) Focus, Concentration and Attention
- + 7.) Imagery Training
- + 8.) Performance States
- + 9.) Performance Errors
- + 10.) Assessments and Technology

# CHAPTER 1: ATHLETIC IDENTITY

“Go out and find what defines your identity as an athlete, your identity as a person. And keep whatever that may be very, very close to you”

What comes after graduation? How to leave college sports without losing yourself – Story by Rachel Stark (NCAA Champion)

# CHAPTER 1: ATHLETIC IDENTITY

- Athletic Identity: Athlete's psychological core as a set of characteristics that an athlete embodies which makes him or her unique (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)
- Sport Ethic: Set of norms and values that embodied within sports that athletes conform to, such as sacrifice, discipline, challenging one's limits, taking risks, etc. (Hughes and Coakley, 1991)
- Over Conformity of Sport Ethic: Expanding sport ethic too far past health and ethics. I.e., steroids/cheating, overtraining and injuries, social health/isolation, etc.

# CHAPTER 1: ATHLETIC IDENTITY

- Exercises Include:
- Reflecting and mindfulness practices on who you are to your core outside of sport
- Who you are to your core within your sport
- What it means to be an athlete
- Finding the balance between sport ethic and over conformity
- This is the foundation that provides us stability to build on



## CHAPTER 2: PRE- PERFORMANCE ROUTINES AND READINESS PLANS

“The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital” – Joe Paterno

“How you run the race – your planning, preparation, practice, and performance counts for everything. Winning or losing is a by-product, and aftereffect of that effort” – John Wooden

# CHAPTER 2: PRE- PERFORMANCE ROUTINES AND READINESS PLANS

- Pre-performance routine: sequence of task-relevant thoughts and actions for the athlete to engage in systematically prior to competition (Mesagno & Mullane-Grant, 2010)
- Including:
  - Goals: Specific to competition
  - Obstacles: Anticipation of challenge
  - Behavior: Preparing thought and emotional response to situations
- Different between routines and rituals/superstitions

# CHAPTER 2: PRE- PERFORMANCE ROUTINES VS. RITUALS/SUPERSTITIONS

- Rituals: A ritual has meaning and can help the athlete get into a certain state such as listening to a particular song or eating a particular food (Lodato, n.d.)
- Superstition: is similar to a ritual in that it is not task relevant, but rather the athlete believes it to be powerful in controlling luck or other external factors, thus taking the control out of the athlete's hands (Minor & Parkinson, 2018)
- Routine: involves more thoughtful, time involving processes such as simulation, self-talk, or even as deep as self-hypnosis (Orlick, 2016)



# CHAPTER 2: DURING PERFORMANCE ROUTINE

- Not all routines have to come before competition
- During performance routine:
  - During performance, this channel of focus shifts in and out, where the athlete can shift his or her focus and attention dependent on his or her sport (Ravizza, 2012).
- 4 Main Areas of Routines:
  - Preparation
  - Resilience
  - Intensity
  - Focus



## CHAPTER 3: SELF-TALK

“Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions for they become habits.” – Margaret Thatcher

“I am the greatest. I said it before I even knew I was.” – Muhammed Ali

# CHAPTER 3: SELF-TALK

- Self-talk is a continuous stream of thoughts that we have throughout our day (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).
- Three categories: motivational (positive), instructional, and negative (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)
  - Motivational (positive): Words of affirmation – “I got this,” “I look forward to challenges,” “this is why I am here”
  - Instructional: Focused on tasks without emotional component – “keep your knees bent,” “exhale on the follow through”
  - Negative: critical and irrational thoughts – “I am terrible at this,” “I will never get it right today,” “the opponent is better than me.”

# CHAPTER 3: SELF-TALK - REFRAMING

- Thought stoppage and Reframing: process that the athlete/performer goes through to improve self-talk by identifying the undesired thought, and then using a cue word or trigger followed by a positive affirmation (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).
- Counterarguments: should be phrased in the present tense and have the action be phrased in a positive connotation (Lodato, n.d.)
- I.e. trigger – snap of fingers. Thoughts – “I have practiced this technique, trust myself”

# CHAPTER 3: SELF-TALK SIMPLIFIED

- Awareness: After competition log your thoughts during the performance
- Identify positives/negatives
- Create counterargument/reframing response to negatives
- Always make thoughts present tense and in first person



## CHAPTER 4: GOAL SETTING AND IMPLEMENTATION

“Dreams are free, goals have a cost.  
While you can daydream for free,  
goals don’t come without a price.  
Time, effort, sacrifice, and sweat. How  
will you pay for your goals?” – Usain  
Bolt

# CHAPTER 4: GOALS VS. DREAMS

- Dreams: When we envision our future and what we might want to accomplish, it can be easy to get wrapped up on a fantasy, which is the glorified part of the outcome (Biswas-Diener, 2010)
  - Ex: lifting the trophy, giving post match interview, etc.

# CHAPTER 4: GOAL SETTING AND GOAL IMPLEMENTATION

- S.M.A.R.T.
- Specific – detailed to create a clear picture of desired goal
- Measurable – ability to collect data or get objective feedback to monitor success and adjust if needed
- Adaptable – goals can be malleable and shift with circumstances, time, and desires
- Realistic – know that there is no guarantee that the goal will be achieved and be honest with results
- Timely – timeline accurately reflects the desired goal



# CHAPTER 4: GOALS AND GOAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Outcome Goals: Big picture goals (Burton & Raedeke, 2008)
  - Little to know control of outcome
  - Start here and work your way back
  - Ex: Get selected All-American, win the next game, or make finals.
- Performance Goals:
  - Smaller more achievable goals with more control of performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)
  - Ex: increase pass completion % by 10 percent in the next 3 comps
- Process Goals:
  - Goals that reflect 100% control to athlete and are the steps necessary to take to improve performance (Burton & Raedeke, 2008)
  - Ex: train an extra 2 hours a week on passing technique

# CHAPTER 4: GOAL SETTING

- Create visual path: Climbing a mountain, going up a staircase, etc.
- Start with outcome (top of the mountain), work backwards to performance (checkpoints along the mountain), and then process (path to the checkpoints starting from the base)
- Goals have positive connotation:
  - I.e. increase pass completion 10% vs. reduce turnovers by 10%
- Be SMART!

# CHAPTER 5: MENTAL TOUGHNESS

“Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it or go around it.” – Michael Jordan

“I really think a champion is defined not by their wins but by how they can recover when they fail.” – Serena Williams

“Concentration and mental toughness are the margins of victory.” – Bill Russell

# CHAPTER 5: MENTAL TOUGHNESS

- What is mental toughness? Has anyone defined this for you or just told you to be it?
- Mental Toughness: “Having the natural or developed psychological edge that enables you to cope better than your opponents with the many demands that sport places on a performer” (Jones, Hanton and Connaughton, 2002)
- Remember sport ethic and over conformity? Careful that mental toughness does not provide you setbacks.
  - Ex: pushing through too much pain and becoming injured
- The 4 C's (Crust & Clough, 2011)

# CHAPTER 5: MENTAL TOUGHNESS – 4 C'S

- Control - The ability to handle lots of things at once and remain influential rather than controlled.
  - Training in the presence of distractions. Controlling what you can control
- Commitment - Being deeply involved with pursuing goals and striving to achieve them despite difficulties
  - Goal setting and goal achievement
- Confidence - The ability to maintain self-belief despite setbacks, and not to be intimidated by opponents.
  - Imagine facing and coming through tough situations
- Challenge - Being able to perceive potential threats as opportunities for personal growth and thriving in constantly changing environments.
  - Increase familiarity with change



# CHAPTER 6: FOCUS, CONCENTRATION, AND ATTENTION

“Focus is like a laser, not a flashlight” – Michael Jordan

“Concentration is the root of all higher abilities in man” –  
Bruce Lee

# CHAPTER 6: FOCUS, CONCENTRATION, AND ATTENTION

- What's the difference between the three?
- Attention:
  - Attention can be described as the process that directs our awareness to information available through our senses (Burton and Raedeke, 2008)
  - Taking possession by the mind of one out of several possible objects or thoughts (Weinberg & Gould, 2019).
- Focus: A more detailed and narrow lens of attention
  - Broad, Narrow, External and Internal
- Concentration:
  - Ability to block out distractors and sustain focus (Burton and Raedeke, 2008).
  - Ability to maintain focus on relevant environmental cues (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)

# CHAPTER 6: FOUR AREAS OF ATTENTIONAL FOCUS

- Broad: Ability to perceive several environmental variables simultaneously
- Narrow: Focus that brings in only one or two variables at a time
- External: Ability to shift awareness to the environment surrounding the individual
- Internal: ability to bring awareness to the individual's thoughts and feelings
- (Burton & Raedeke, 2008; Weinberg & Gould, 2019)



# CHAPTER 6: FOCUS AND ATTENTION CONT.

- Broad-External:
  - Ex: Hiker who examines the entire mountainside, or quarterback reading defenses, time, weather etc.
- Broad-Internal:
  - Ex: Hiker decides path based on all the information. Quarterback audible on play calling based on broad information
- Narrow-External:
  - Ex: Hiker looking at foot and hand placement on the next step. Quarterback estimating wide receiver matchup on corner
- Narrow-Internal
  - Ex: Hiker breathing each step and feeling foot placement. Quarterback preparing to receive ball from the center



# CHAPTER 6: CONCENTRATION AND ATTENTION CAPACITY

- Situational Awareness: Ability to make appropriate decisions based on the competition and game situations while under pressure and time demands (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)
- Attention Capacity: The ability to process and focus multiple thoughts, situations, and stimuli simultaneously.
- Understand the times we lose focus by leaving present moment and create trigger to refocus.



# CHAPTER 7: IMAGERY

“I am a big believer in visualization. I run through my races mentally so that I feel even more prepared” –  
Allyson Felix

“I have visualized my imagination so clearly and so consistently that it has manifested itself into my reality” –  
Conor McGregor

# CHAPTER 7: IMAGERY TRAINING

- Systematic routine, that recruits all of the bodily senses to create or re-create an experience in one's mind (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).
- 90% of U.S. Olympians use some form of imagery training  
97% of them finding it beneficial to their performance.  
100% of U.S. Olympic Training Center sport consultants use some form of mental imagery (Weinberg and Gould, 2019)
- Using all 5 senses to create maximum reality and vividness
- PETTLEP Model (Ramsey et al., 2010).

# CHAPTER 7: IMAGERY TRAINING - PETTLEP

- Physical: Posture, athletic wear, and other physical characteristics.
- Environment: Rehearse the exact details of the surrounding area such as the field, stadium, weather, fans, etc.
- Task: Specific skills that the athlete uses in these images
- Timing: Create the image in real time and actual speed of execution
- Learning: Level of the athlete's ability when executing their sport demands
- Emotion: Feel the joy, confusion, anxiety, or any deep feeling associated with the experience.
- Perspective: External (lens through spectator view) Internal (lens through personal view. Go-pro on head)

# CHAPTER 7: IMAGERY TRAINING – HOW TO DO IT

- Burton and Raedeke (2008) note that athletes use anywhere from 10-15 minutes of time to 2-3 hours four times a week dependent on their timeframe and experience.
- Weinberg & Gould (2019) recommend based on research that athletes do 15-30 minutes of imagery every day.
- Use for pre-performance routine, during performance routine, recovery routine, and new skill acquisition/development
- Recall positive past experience or future anticipated experiences



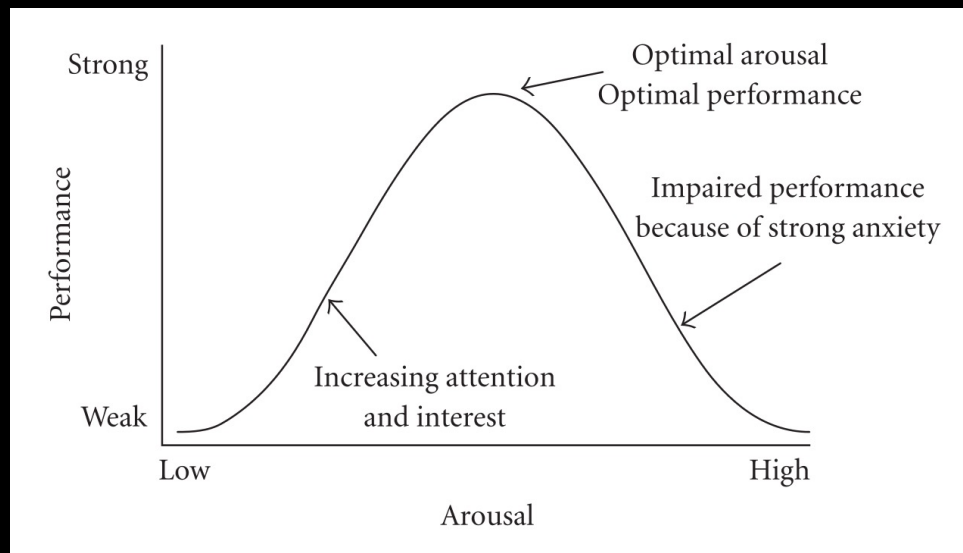
# CHAPTER 8: PERFORMANCE STATES

“Because I didn’t have a lot of balance and because I truthfully didn’t know how to mentally process all of it, the anxiety started to kind of spiral, and I wasn’t able to cope” – Anonymous NCAA Student-Athlete

# CHAPTER 8:

## PERFORMANCE STATES

- Arousal: Intensity of one's motivation during a specific moment that falls on a continuum allowing the athlete to evaluate his or her energy levels (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)
- Individual Zone of Optimal Function (IZOF) Model





# CHAPTER 8:

## PERFORMANCE STATES

- Too little arousal can lead to slow reactions, little explosiveness, etc. Too high arousal can lead to tension in the body, anxiety and choking.
- Anxiety: Emotional state accompanied with nervousness, worry, and apprehension that results in overactivation of the muscles in the body leading to “tenseness” and could lead to negative performance habits but some positive ones as well (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)
- Choking: A product of losing concentration due to distractions and/or anxiety (Orlick, 2016).



# CHAPTER 8: PERFORMANCE STATES

- Lower Arousal:
  - Practice diaphragmic breathing (3-4 second inhale 3-4 second exhale 2-3 times)
  - Imagery of behavior adaptation
  - Calming self-talk
- Heighten Arousal:
  - Shallower more aggressive breathing
  - Psych-up triggers/cues
  - Imagery of execution
  - Intense self-talk



# CHAPTER 8: PERFORMANCE STATES

- Assessments and Logging:
  - Competitive State Anxiety Inventory – 2
  - IZOF level when you performed your best vs. worst
- Incorporate into imagery training, self-talk training, and pre-performance/during performance routines
- Find the balance that best works for you, not for another athlete.



# CHAPTER 9: PERFORMANCE ERRORS

“The real glory is being knocked to your knees and then coming back. That’s real glory. That’s the essence of it.” –  
Vince Lombardi

“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed” –  
Michael Jordan

# CHAPTER 9:

## PERFORMANCE ERRORS

- Performance Errors: Mistakes or setbacks that occur during performance.
- Negative Effects of Performance Errors:
  - Loss of Concentration
  - Frustration
  - Emptiness
  - Anger
- Positive Effects of Performance Errors:
  - Motivation
  - Optimism
- Perspective: “It is said that 10% of life is what happens to you, 90% how you respond to it” (Mack & Casstevens, 2001)

# CHAPTER 9: PERFORMANCE ERRORS - COPING

- Coping: A dynamic and changing process that an individual uses involving both cognitive and behavioral efforts as a response to stress or to manage stress.
- Problem-focused coping: The cognitive part of coping
  - Remove negative situation. Ex: Recover defensively, shoot from distance, etc.
- Emotion-focused coping: The behavioral part of coping
  - Meditation, breathing, words of affirmation, etc.
- (Weinberg & Gould, 2019)

# CHAPTER 9: PERFORMANCE ERRORS AND THE R'S

- Created by Ken Ravizza - adopted and adjusted by Alex Bolowich
- Recognize – understand setback and it's over with
- Release – Wash away, let go, etc.
- Regroup – breathing and posture
- Refocus – visualize next moment/action, controlled breathing,
- Rhythm – simplify next actions and execute controllable actions.
- Respond – Trust yourself

(Aoyagi & Poczwardowski, 2012)



# CHAPTER 10: ASSESSMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

“It’s not about your resources. It’s about your resourcefulness” – Tony Robbins



# CHAPTER 10: ASSESSMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Smartphones:
  - Teenagers and young adults can be drawn to their phones for an average of three hours per day (Durand-Bush & DesClouds, 2018)
  - Use of applications, video editing, journaling, are all positive examples of the use of smartphones.
- Neurotracker:
  - MOT (multiple object tracking)
  - 8 balls, 4 highlighted to track. Highlights removed. Balls move for 8 seconds. Spot the 4 previously highlighted balls.
  - Neurotracker picks up speed as success happens to increase difficulty
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MZgaaVZjDE>

# CHAPTER 10: ASSESSMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Why take assessments and not just interview with a professional/specialist?
- Four points:
  - A.) they are comprehensive and can cover a topic more in depth than an interviewer
  - B.) they are official and encourage the athletes to answer questions they may feel reluctant to tell someone
  - C.) provide a common language that is understandable
  - D.) they are empirical allowing us to measure and quantify data

(Biswas-Diener 2010).

# CHAPTER 10: ASSESSMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Examples of what athletes could use:
- Concentration Enhancement: Concentration Grid
  - A.) Complete and measure time
  - B.) Complete with minor distraction and measure time
  - C.) Complete with a variety of distractions and measure time
- Cognitive-Perceptual Enhancement: Neurotracker
  - A.) Complete and measure accuracy. Do 20 repetitions and complete at the highest speed the Neurotracker sets you to.

# CHAPTER 10: ASSESSMENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Audiobooks/Podcasts:
  - A.) High Performance Podcast – Jake Humphrey and Damian Hughes
  - B.) Unbeatable Mind Podcast – Mark Divine
  - C.) The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Stephen R. Covey
  - D.) Mind Gym – Gary Mack and David Casstevens
- Stress and Anxiety Assessments:
  - A.) Competitive State Anxiety Inventory – 2
  - B.) Perceived Stress Scale
- Phone Applications:
  - A.) iBreathe – Guide to breathing practices
  - B.) Calm – Breathing, relaxation and meditation practice
  - C.) Inner Balance – synchronizing your heart, mind and emotions
  - D.) Reflectly – mood tracker and journal

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