

# **Psych Toolkit**

## ***Introduction***

Athletes train for months, even years for the chance to perform at their best on a specific day - a performance which might only last for a few seconds. Proper mental preparation and concentration is often the difference between performing at your best, or having a disappointing result.

This workshop presents a brief introduction to several key sports psych concepts and practices that can be used to maximize your chances for success.

## ***Pre-Competition Training***

### **Goals**

- Develop a strong mental image of the perfect performance
- Build confidence in physical training preparation

### **Visualization**

Visualization is the practice of imaging yourself executing the perfect throw, jump, or run. Since muscles have no capacity for memory, the mind is where all understanding of athletic movement is stored. Therefore, the mind is capable of 'practicing' without actually using the muscles.

To optimize the effectiveness of visualization, athletes must try to imagine as many details as possible. Imagining the texture of the track, the feel of the javelin, the grittiness of the sand in your shoes after a good landing in the long jump will all help to increase the value of the exercise. The best visualization occurs when the athlete recalls images in the first-person, ie. as if they are inside their own bodies. A good session will last only 10-15 minutes, but can be repeated throughout the day.

### **Use the following to help...**

- Stand or lie in a quiet location, and relax
- Start with simple, familiar feelings and skills
- Gradually increase complexity and duration with practice
- See yourself being successful!

Try visualizing your performance in an event now...

### **Simulation**

It is said that practice makes perfect, so it makes sense to practice at a competition level from time to time. Simulation involves running a practice exactly like a competition day. Warm-up, competition, and cool-down should all be done according to the competition day plan. Simulation practices are a good opportunity to video tape, and evaluate training progress. Note that for the best results and reduced chances of injury, simulation sessions should only be performed during periods of low training intensity.

*"The more vivid and accurate the feeling, and the more effectively you perform within that image, the greater your chances of replicating the image in the real situation."*

*"To have been there before without ever having been there - that is the goal of simulation."*





*"I am capable of adapting to any environment condition. The wind, the lane, the course, the competitors make no difference. I am in control (of me)."*

## **Additional**

### **Resources:**

"Psyching For Sport"

- Terry Orlick, PhD (1986)

"In Pursuit Of Excellence"

- Terry Orlick, PhD (2000)

"Visions Of Excellence"

- Mark Tewksbury (1994)

Sports & Performance Psychology  
Article Indexes:

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*"To live your life in your own way,  
to reach for the goals you have set  
for yourself, to be the you that you  
want to be - that is success."*

# **Competition Day Focus**

## **Goals**

- Maintain concentration
- Focus on the process needed to achieve the perfect performance
- Have a positive attitude and confidence in your abilities

## **Controllable Factors**

Your mental state during a competition can be improved by removing as many distractions as possible. There are several areas that you can prepare for:

**Equipment** - Prepare a list of the things you need for competition day.

**Diet** - Proper nutrients and energy can have an obvious effect on performance.

**Sleep** - Lack of sleep can affect your energy, concentration, and emotions.

**Other Factors...**

## **Uncontrollable Factors**

These are factors which athletes have no control over. This list includes:

**Weather**   **Officials**   **Facilities**   **Equipment**   **Competitors**

**Other Factors:**

Since you have no control over these things, there is little sense in wasting energy worrying about them. It is also true that these factors will be the same for everyone in the competition. In a close competition, those who are able to maintain their focus despite these distractions will be the ones who most often perform to their potential.

## **Staying In Focus**

So what can you do on the day to help ensure that things go your way?

**Follow your competition plan**

This might include getting your first throw or jump "in", or getting through the heats to the final. Avoid being distracted by external factors.

**Focus on process not outcome**

Concentrate on the 3 key technical points of your "perfect" performance. Avoid thinking about other competitors, "what if" scenarios, or specific results.

**Self talk**

Reinforce the positive images of success, training preparation, and key technical elements. Avoid negative comments & "self-fulfilling prophecies".

# **Post Competition Analysis**

## **Goals**

- Learn from positive & negative experiences
- Improve plan for training and future competitions

## **Assessment & Learning**

Take some time to look back on the competition, recognize what went well, and what needs improvement. Be sure to analyse your mental as well as physical performance.

## **Self Worth**

Your performance, good or bad, does not determine your value as a person or an athlete. They are just results on one particular day. You are better for the experience.