2013 USTFCCCA Coaches Convention

Psychological Tools for the Student/Athlete and the Coach

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Jennifer Agnew after winning the 2013 NSIC XC Championship Crown
Psychological Skills Training

The skills needed psychologically to enhance training, performance, and life situations.
Psychological Skills Training

Two continuums of abnormal to supernormal behavior

- Clinical sport psychologists deal with serious psychological problems (abnormal behavior)
- Educational sport psychologists help normal athletes (normal to supernormal behaviors), become better through supernormal psychological skills training
Psychological Skills Training

- Educating the athletes
- Helping the athletes acquire these skills
- Practicing these skills
2013 NSIC Outdoor Track & Field Champions
Psychological Skills for Athletes

- Imagery Skills
- Psychological Energy Management
- Stress Management
- Attentional Skills
- Regulating Arousal and Anxiety
- Goal-Setting Skills
Imagery Skills

Imagery is a sensory approach, using the mind to experience internally desired situations by vividly recalling and reconstructing events.
Imagery Skills

- Use clear, concise, and vivid images of the desired outcomes in realistic situations
  - Vividness
  - Controllability
Managing Psychological Energy

Psychological energy is the vigor, vitality, and intensity with which the mind functions and is the bedrock of motivation.
Managing Psychological Energy

The optimal energy zone is an ora of effortless and utopian sensations, to be experienced by the athletes when the optimal zone has been reached with the desired flow state. The flow state is characterized by increased concentration, lack of outside distractions influence, increased control, clear, concise, and understanding of the exact specifics of the activity.
Stress Management

To alleviate negative stress in one's training and performance routine.
Stress Management

- Environmental engineering
- Somatic (Body), stress management techniques
  - Relaxation Techniques
  - Progressive Relaxation Training
  - Biofeedback
- Cognitive (Mental), stress management techniques
  - Imagery
  - Self-Instructions
  - Goal Setting
Managing stress is about self-awareness, identifying the stress, choosing an effective stress management technique for each athlete, and practicing the effective resource for effective results.
Attention is the mental process whereby athletes direct and maintain awareness of stimuli directed by their senses.

Attentional skills are selecting the correct stimuli, shifting the attention from one skill to another, and sustaining attention and concentration.
Sustaining Attention and Concentration

- Mental Alertness
- Concentration
Regulating Arousal and Anxiety

Control arousal and anxiety levels at races with calming talks giving the athletes confidence.

Most coaches tend to use pep talks, hype up speeches, etc. to get the individual/team ready to perform in a big race setting... this only further increases arousal and anxiety of the athlete and can sometimes even stress the athlete out to the point that it becomes counter-productive.

Try to maintain a calmness and control about your words, tone, and actions... it is good to be excited and help the athletes and team understand that races are important... but not to get them too excited that they have unnecessary stress about the race (which will ultimately hurt them during the race), save their energy and release arousal throughout the race... arousal release is important-timing.
Regulating Arousal and Anxiety cont.

- Focus on being relaxed and breathing normal
- Positive imagery
- Mental rehearsal
- Simulations
- Preparation
- Be ready for changes, don’t panic
- Attentional Focus- be aware of situations and be able to refocus on each situation (different races in one meet, different mile markers in one race, different stages of a race-beginning is controlled, middle is stay with the pack, end is move through the pack, kick is pass someone, etc.)
Goals

Goals improve performance, improve the quality of training sessions, clarify expectations, relieve boredom, challenge, increase intrinsic motivation, and increase pride, satisfaction, and self-confidence.
Goal Setting Principles/ Skills

- Set performance goals—as well as outcome goals
- Set challenging goals
- Set realistic goals
- Set specific—Not general goals
- Set short term goals
- Emphasize individual AND team goals
Goal-Setting Program

- Task Analysis
- Measuring Performance
- Setting the Goal
- Ranking Goals
- Coordination Requirements
Implementing Psychological Skills Training

PST helps athletes become more responsible for themselves, enhances an individual’s self-worth, enhances self-competence, teaches mental skills that can be learned to help physical performances, helps athletes learn about self-awareness, and helps athletes learn to train with body and mind together.
Implementing Psychological Skills Training

- Initial PST orientation
- PST Team sessions
- Individual PST counseling
- Incorporating PST into practice and competitions
- Monitoring progress
- Evaluation and feedback
Interpreting Success and Failure

- Clearly define success for each individual and for the team with short term and long term goals that can be realistically achieved.
- Performance and Outcome Goals defined - Use more Performance
- Their own ability, their own effort, the difficulty of the task, the degree of good or bad luck experienced.
Preventing Slumps, Staleness and Burnout

Both physiological and psychological

Physiological Symptoms
- Higher resting and exercising heart rate
- Higher resting systolic blood pressure
- Delayed return to normal heart rate after exercise
- Increased muscle soreness and chronic muscle fatigue
- Increased incidence of colds and respiratory infections
- Decreased maximum aerobic power
- Loss of appetite
- Decreased libido
- Subcostal aching
- Bowel disorders
Preventing Slumps, Staleness and Burnout cont.

Psychological Symptoms
- Loss of self-confidence
- Excessive weariness that is prolonged
- Deteriorating interactions with teammates
- Signs of apathy, or lack of feeling
- Increased irritability
- Increased and unpredictable mood disturbances
- Signs of depression
- Increased anxiety
- Periods of confusion
- Demonstrations of open anger or hostility
- Lack of drive, passion, enthusiasm for tasks
- Poor concentration, focus, attention
Preventing Slumps, Staleness and Burnout cont.

Common Causes of Slumps/ Staleness/ Burnout
- Length of competitive season
- Perceived monotony of training
- General boredom
- Lack of positive reinforcement
- Excessively stringent rules
- Feelings of claustrophobia
- Perceived low accomplishment
- Perceived training overload
- High levels of competitiveness
- Feelings of helplessness
- Abusiveness from coaches and other authority figures
Preventing Slumps, Staleness and Burnout cont.

Prevention of Staleness/ Burnout
- Ensure proper planning and pacing of training
- Be creative in scheduling planned time-outs
- Be sure to use positive reinforcement generously
- Include mental practice periods in your training sessions
- Allow your athletes the opportunity to have some control over choices and outcomes
- Make every effort to manage both pre-competitive, competitive, and post-competitive stress
When everything Works!
References


