OVERCOMING THE PERFORMANCE FEARS OF TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES

Ralph Vernacchia, Ph.D.
FEAR VS. CONFIDENCE

**FEAR**
- Doubt
- Worry
- Hesitation
- Indecision

**CONFIDENCE**
- Trust
- Belief
- Happiness
THE ILLUSION OF WORRY

• “Lots of horrible things have happened to me in my life, most of which never occurred”

Mark Twain
FEAR: DIFFERENT TAKES

• “We have nothing to fear but fear itself”
• “Pressure? That’s what they put in tires”
• “In order to be courageous you must first experience fear”
• “It’s OK to be nervous, but don’t lose your nerve”
• “Perform with emotion, but don’t be emotional”
• “Sports are games of mistakes...”
• “Learn to be comfortable in uncomfortable situations”
Fearful Ways of Thinking

- Catastrophic Thinking
- Perfectionism
- All or None (Polarized Thinking)
- Self-worth based on achievement
- Personalization
- Blaming
- One-trial generalizations
- Fallacy of fairness
Circle of Control

- Weather
- Officiating
- Facilities
- Scheduling
- Opponents
- Spectators
- Meet Procedures & Protocol

- Physical/Mental Prep
- Attitude
- Goals
- Time Management
- Effort
- Execution
- Emotion Management
- Equipment
- Performance Plan
PERFORMANCE FEARS

FEAR \rightarrow \text{Fear of Failure} \rightarrow \text{CONFIDENCE}
FEAR OF FAILURE
THREAT VS. CHALLENGE

- The “post-millennial” athlete and fear of failure
- Separate the athlete’s identity from their performance
- Focus on the process not the outcome
- Help the athlete stay in love with their sport
- Focus on self-improvement vs comparison to others
- Learn to take the good with the bad
PERFORMANCE FEARS

FEAR

Fear of Failure
Perfectionism
Fear of Injury
Fear of Success

CONFIDENCE
“GROWTH MINDSET”

- Confidence based on preparation
- Weaknesses viewed as challenges
- Value accomplishment through hard work, patience, and persistence
- Be effort-conscious
- Stress internal factors that compliment talent—determination, will, and commitment
- Embrace constructive evaluation
PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

• Belief precedes confidence
• Pursue confidence based on preparation
• Embrace the spotlight
• View weakness as challenges
• Focus and re-focus on what you would like to do
• Focus on the positive: Positive self-talk/positive visualization
• Be RESILIENT: Anticipate and prepare
• Use routines and performance cues to stay focused
• Develop and adhere to a performance plan
• Constructive evaluation
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ATTRIBUTES OF CONFIDENT TRACK & FIELD ATHLETES

- Optimistic
- Prepared
- Challenge-Oriented
- Focused
- Positive
- Resilient
- Routine-Centered
- Planners
- Self-Caring
- Evaluators
Overcoming the Performance Fears of Track and Field Athletes

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CONFIDENCE-BUILDING GUIDELINES

• Build Physical, Mental, Emotional & Spiritual Confidence
• Confidence = Control x Competency
• Increase Variety
• Help The Athlete Remain In Touch With Love Of The Activity
• Keep The Vision: (Short Term vs. Long Term)
• Develop HARDINESS: Threat vs. Challenge
• Mistakes As Steps To Success
Developing Performance Confidence

• Pursue confidence based on preparation
• Embrace the spotlight
• View weakness as challenges & focus on your strengths
• Focus and re-focus on what you would like to do
  • “Successful people see what they want to have happen; unsuccessful people see what they don’t want to happen”
• Focus on the positive: Use positive self-talk & positive visualization to enhance the desired performance
• Be resilient: Anticipate and prepare are the keys to mental toughness
• Use routines and performance cues to stay focused on the desired performance
• Develop and adhere to a performance plan
• Constructive evaluation
“GROWTH MINDSET”

- Confidence based on preparation
- Weaknesses viewed as challenges
- Value accomplishment through hard work, patience, and persistence
- Be effort-conscious
- Stress internal factors that compliment talent—determination, will, and commitment
- Embrace constructive evaluation
FEAR OF FAILURE
Threat vs. Challenge

• Separate the athlete’s identity from their performance
• Focus on the process not the outcome
  ➢ SUCCESS = Ability x Preparation x Effort x Will
• Focus on self-improvement vs. comparison to others
• Learn to take the good with the bad
• The “gifted” athlete and fear of failure
Title and content layout with list

• Add your first bullet point here
• Add your second bullet point here
• Add your third bullet point here
PERFORMANCE FEARS

FEAR  Fear of Failure  CONFIDENCE
Title and content layout with chart
Two content layout with table

• First bullet point here
• Second bullet point here
• Third bullet point here

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>82</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two content layout with SmartArt

- First bullet point here
- Second bullet point here
- Third bullet point here
Add a Slide Title - 3
Add a Slide Title -
4
Add a Slide Title -
5