



SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY -  
 HOW TO MAINTAIN MOTIVATION DURING INJURY, STRESS & ANXIETY

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**Abstract:**The study was to the basketball male players as subjects who had represented interuniversity level tournaments.The study was physiological characteristics a.Aerobic power b.Anaerobic power c.Vital capacity d.Resting pulse rate.The study was to the following psychological characteristics a.Anxiety, b.Agression, c.Self-concept d. Locus of control . For the purpose of this study one hundred and fifty university level male basketball players were randomly selected from the west zone interuniversity basketball tournament. The ages of the subjects were between 18 and 27 years. To find out the relationship of selected physiological and psychological variables to Basketball performance, product moment method of correlation was used.To find out the combined relationship of set variables of physiological and psychological variables to Basketball performance, multiple correlation method was used.To predict the Basketball performance on the basis of selected physiological and psychological variables, multiple regression analysis was used.The level of significance was set at .05 levels.

**Introduction:**

Being a successful athlete is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year job that entails the employment of a clear mind. That job is not only for the athlete, but also for those who influence athletes such as parents, brothers, sisters, bosses, and more. An athlete will compete and train optimally with a clear mind.

If an athlete engages in a fight at home with parents or siblings prior to competition, then chances are they will not compete with a clear mind on the field. This will cause a reduction in performance through various mind- body mechanisms. When the athletic mind is cluttered with stress or anxiety it does not perform well and in some sports it can increase the chance of injury.

Athletes can lose motivation, focus, determination, and more. In face stress and anxiety can cause physical changes in the body such as trigger points or muscle spasms. Stress and anxiety can cause the visual field to narrow and can slow down reaction times. These can greatly reduce performance. There are many psychological factors that affect performance. A strong knowledge of them can help maintain or increase performance.

**Motivation:**

Motivation is the focus and intensity of an athlete's effort. Some athletes look for and are attracted to certain athletic situations. Therefore, they are motivated to play football, or eat a balanced athletic diet so that they perform well. Once an athlete is attracted to a certain situation, then they devote an amount or intensity of effort to that situation.

It is important to note an athlete's reason for motivation to a particular sport or situation, and that parents, spouses, coaches and other athletes will play a key role in an athlete's motives. In contrast, athletes can be unmotivated to certain task or situations. Thus, athletes, coaches, spouses, and parents should look for non-motivational influences on sports performance and try to avoid them or provide a positive influence.

**Arousal:**

Arousal is the physiological and psychological activation of an athlete. It can range from a deep sleep to total excitement. High levels of arousal have been known to cause sweating, an accelerated heart rate, muscle tension, coordination difficulties, changes in attention, and an increase in

respirations. Arousal is not always positive. For instance, an athlete may become highly aroused when she wins a game. However, her opponent may become highly aroused because she lost the game.

Performance is affected by the level of arousal experienced by the athlete. At low levels of arousal the athlete's performance will be subpar. This is because the athlete is not psyched up. As arousal increases, so does performance up to a point. There is an optimal point (depends on athlete) of arousal that will produce the best results for performance. As the athlete to find that optimal point of arousal.

#### **Anxiety:**

Anxiety is a negative emotional state. When athletes experience anxiety they often feel nervous, apprehensive, and worried. There are two types of anxiety: state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety is an emotional state that activates the autonomic nervous system which causes feelings of apprehension and tension. Trait anxiety is part of the athlete's personality and is a behavioral tendency.

This predisposes an athlete to a variety of physical or psychological non-dangerous situations and the athlete interprets these situations as threatening. The response of the athlete is usually with state anxiety. Some athletes have a greater degree of trait anxiety than other athletes.

For instance, you could put two athletes in identical pressured situations and one athlete would have entirely different state anxiety responses due to his/her personality (i.e. their levels of trait anxiety). The pressure may not affect one of the athletes at all, but the other may have high levels of trait anxiety and therefore, that athlete may crumble under the pressure.

#### **Stress:**

Stress is a sequence of events that starts with a stimulus or external demand. Then the athlete has a perception of the external demand, he/she produces a response, and a behavior is seen to the external demand. In the first stage of stress a physical and psychological demand is placed on an athlete, such as kicking a field goal. Then in

stage two the field goal kicker perceives the demand. This stage is influenced by trait anxiety.

Depending on the level of trait anxiety the athlete has, will depend on the perception of and response to the situation. In stage three the athlete may become aroused, experience state anxiety, and the athlete may have muscle tension (usually in the shoulders). At this point the athlete will have attention changes and may lose focus. Finally, the athlete will exhibit a behavior and either crack under the stress, or the athlete may actually improve performance.

Athletes should work on finding out what causes them stress not only during athletic activity but also during life away from the field. Even when an athlete becomes stressed the field, the affects of that stress can still have an affects on athletic performance. An athlete needs to stay in a stress free environment. This means that everyone around the athlete needs to help try and make the athlete avoid stress. Remember successful athletes perform optimally. It is hard to perform optimally when an athlete is under stress.

#### **Goal setting:**

Athletes should set goals in practice, competition, and everyday life. Sometimes athletes do things such as not eating properly. This can be considered an everyday life experience that affects performance. So the athlete may set a goal to eat right. There are many types of goals such as winning a race, practicing longer, winning a championship, and more. Goals can be both small and large. They can also be both long and short term. A long term goal would be to win a national championship at the end of the season.

A short term goal would be to work specifically on one of your weaknesses in practice all week. Goals can also be for a particular outcome or for performance. An outcome goal would be the outcome of an event such as winning the next game. A performance goal would be to run the 40 yard dash in 4.5 seconds. Whatever the goal setting techniques an athlete uses it is an excellent practice for athletes to use.

Goal setting is useful because it allows athletes to direct attention to important elements of a skill being performed and it can mobilize the athlete's effort. Goals also prolong an athlete's persistence and it may develop new learning strategies. Goals also influence athletes by affecting their psychological state such as confidence, anxiety, and satisfaction.

The following are principles that athletes can follow in basic goal setting.

- Consider participant personality
- Establish realistic goals
- Establish short term and long term goals
- Establish performance goals
- Provide for goal evaluation
- Establish specific goals
- Develop goal achievement strategies
- Calculate individual goal commitment
- Provide goal support

#### **Confidence:**

Confidence is the belief that you can successfully perform a desired behavior. Athletes use self confidence to expect success. They might be confident in the fact that they will score goal, dunk a basketball, or break a record. A confident athlete is one who believes in him/herself. The athlete believes that he/she has the necessary skills to complete a task.

Athletes who lack confidence doubt whether they are good enough or have the skills need to complete a task. When they doubt themselves they create a self fulfilling prophesy which means expecting something to happen will actually help cause it to happen. This is common in athletics. Negative self –fulfilling prophesies are psychological barriers that lead to a vicious cycle. An expectation of failure may actually lead to failure. This lowers self-image and increases future failure expectations.

#### **Concentration:**

Concentration is the process of attention and focus. The better your concentration, the better athlete you will be. However, this will greatly depend on what you are paying your attention to. Also, what is your focus? If you are calling the wrong play, having lost your focus, you will play poorly. If you are

focused on a bad argument you had with a family member before the game, you will not perform well. If you are focused on your opponent your technique, your play calling, you will have a better chance at performing well. Once you have mastered your physical techniques, the road to peak performance will be asserting your mental techniques (e.g. concentration, focus, mental imagery, and confidence).

#### **Aggression:**

Aggression is a behavior that is intended to cause harm to another person. That harm could be psychological and/or physical. Aggression is classified as hostile and instrumental. Hostile aggression is not good in sports, while instrumental aggression under certain circumstances may help performance. There are three theories for aggression in sports that state that it could result from instinct, frustration or it could be social (learned from others). Athletes need to find out what theory applies to them and eliminate their aggression if it endangers others or decreases their performance.

#### **The zone of optimal function:**

The zone is described as a state of total immersion in a task at hand, and creation of a state of mind where optimal performance occurs. Athletes sometimes say that they feel one with the game or the game flows through them. Some scientists believe that there are particular activities that are more likely to produce the zone state, and personal traits that help people achieve the zone more easily.

The zone does not depend upon the nature of challenges or the level of an athlete's skill; it depends on the athlete's perception of the challenges and their skill. If an athlete is bored with competition he/she will not or it will be harder to get in the zone. If the athlete is worried about the competition, has anxiety from competition, or external stress (home life, school, etc), it will be hard for them to get in the zone.

The zone lies between boredom and anxiety. If an athlete is too bored with competition, then he/she may not get in the zone and perform well. This often happens

when the competition level is low. For instance, an athlete plays a game where the other team is not as skilled; the athlete may not try as hard. The game becomes boring and flow state or the zone is hard to reach. However, if competition is too high then an athlete may feel pressured or worried and a state of anxiety will set in. This will make it hard for an athlete to get in the zone and perform well. Optimal performance happens within the zone.

#### **Mental Imagery / Visualization:**

Mental imagery or visualization refers to creating or recreating an experience in the mind. The process involves recalling pieces of information stored in the mind from former experiences and shaping these pieces into useful images. The images are then reconstructed into previous events for the simulation of an event to be replayed in the mind.

It is similar to a real sensory experience. For instance, a swimmer may visualize jumping into the water and grinding out the laps to get to the finish line. He or she may even imagine hearing the roar of the crowd, the praise from the coach, and more when the athlete wins the race. Amazingly our minds can imagine events that have not yet occurred. There are two types of mental imagery: internal and external imagery. Internal imagery refers to imagining the execution of a skill from your own vantage point (i.e. how you would see it through your eyes). You would feel the movement, such as a batter swinging the bat and you would hear the crack of the bat as it strikes the ball. If you are using external imagery, you are viewing yourself as a spectator.

You are outside your body watching yourself swing the bat. You are analyzing the motion of the bat, your hips, your legs, the path of the ball, and such. Athletes who are great at imagery use all of their senses to make their images as vivid and detailed as possible. Mental imagery can greatly help an athlete, and should be regularly practiced.

#### **Psychology of injury:**

When athletes become injured, they don't only experience physical injury, but mentally they become injured as well. For some athletes the psychological issues of

injury decrease their ability to rehabilitate. An athlete is a special breed, they thrive for competition. When their ability to compete is taken away by injury, they can go through five known psychological states.

#### **Denial and Isolation:**

In this state the athlete will deny that the injury has occurred they will refuse treatment, and they will try to participate, which may cause further injury.

#### **Anger:**

Once athletes realize that they are injured, they will become angry at themselves or may be angry at the coaches or team.

#### **Bargaining:**

When the athlete calms down he/she usually tries to bargain their way back on the field. They say tape up the injury it does not hurt anymore. This state can be dangerous because if the athlete goes back out on the field, he/she will cause even more damage to his/her body.

#### **Depression:**

Sometimes athletes will think that their season or career is over and they will stop rehabilitation. At this point, the athlete must be motivated to rehabilitate or they may never make it back from the injury.

#### **Acceptance:**

The athlete accepts that they are injured and that hard work will need to be applied to rehabilitate the injury.

An athlete's emotional state will have a direct impact on his/her rehab program. More importantly the rehab program will have an even bigger impact on the athlete's ability to perform. If the athlete does not give maximum effort in rehab he/she will not get back to 100% as fast, and the athlete will miss games. Also, by not putting forth maximum effort rehab, the athlete can decrease his/her performance for the remainder of the athlete's career.

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