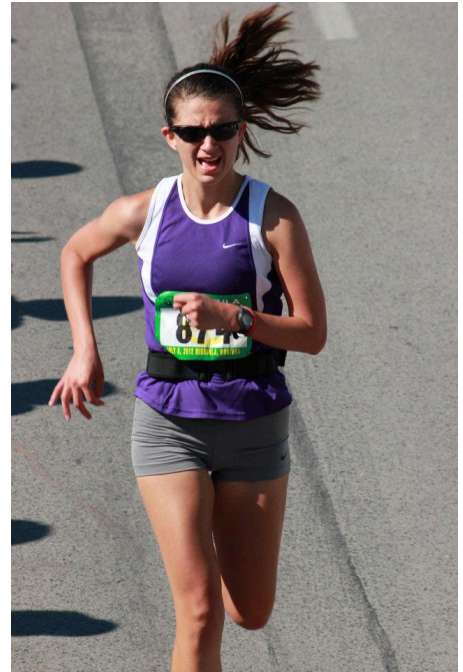


# **Mental Training Program for Runners**

Jayson Anderson, Jill Merkel and Maria Ralph

## **Contents:**

- A. Relaxation Techniques
  - 1. Relaxation During Competition
  - 2. Breathing Exercises
  - 3. Yoga for Runners
  - 4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- B. Energy/Emotional Management Techniques
  - 1. Self-Talk
  - 2. Self-Confidence
  - 3. Pre-Performance Routines
- C. Other Mental Skills
  - 1. Goal Setting
  - 2. Imagery



## **Objectives**

1. To reduce anxiety and manage arousal and emotion before and during competition.
2. To recognize the importance of self-talk and reframe appropriately to enhance performance.
3. To improve self-confidence in order to optimize performance.
4. To set realistic goals that focus on both process and outcome to motivate and guide training.
5. To prepare for optimal performance through the use of vivid, controllable imagery sessions.

## Introduction

Because of the intensity of training for and competing in running races, mental preparation is a key variable for success and may have a direct influence on injury and performance.

Athletes have indicated that mental skills have a positive influence on their performance experiences and outcomes.

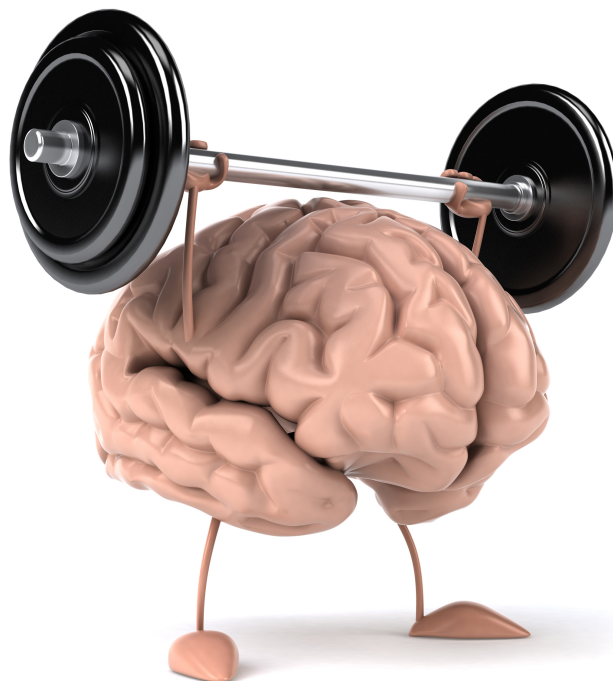
Having a greater understanding of what type of running and mental skills preparation contributes to an injury-free training cycle and maximizes performance will allow coaches, runners, and clinicians to make more informed decisions on training schedules.

Hamstra-Wright et al. (2013)

“Psychological skills training (PST) refers to the systematic and consistent practice of mental or psychological skills for the purpose of enhancing performance, increasing enjoyment, or achieving greater sport and physical activity self-satisfaction.”

Imagery, goal-setting, self-talk and physical relaxation techniques are named as the four basic mental techniques predominately used in sport psychology interventions.

Birrer and Morgan (2010)



# *Part One: Relaxation Techniques*



## Relaxation

“Relaxing is a key component to healthy, efficient running, starting with your head and working down to your feet”

- **Smile** – Smile for a short period of time and then release the muscles in your face. This is the easiest way to relax your face.
- **Breath** – Through proper breathing, you can help loosen up the rest of your body, especially your shoulders. To relax your shoulders while running, breathe in deeply through your nose, and completely fill your lungs. Your shoulders will rise with the air intake. Exhale a little forcefully through your mouth, dropping your shoulders and expelling all the air. Notice that your shoulders drop and your arms relax.
- **“Shake it Out”** – When your shoulders and arms are tight during training or performance, drop your hands to your side and shake out your arms and hands while running.
- **Mental Check** – Performing a mental check to monitor how relaxed you feel and how well your breath is flowing. With this increased awareness, you'll not only feel better and enjoy your runs more and race faster.

Stevenson, 2011

## Breathing Exercises

“Endurance athletes, and especially runners, need to intensely focus on breathing and relaxation drills, then apply these drill concepts to their long runs”

### *Exercises*

**3-In-5-Out:** If you're an endurance athlete who struggles with the heart rate spiking problem, begin to incorporate this drill at least three different times during the day (i.e. on the elevator, in the shower, before your run). As you breathe, attempt to “hear” your breath. It should almost sound like a roaring ocean.

- Imagine your lungs as a tire around your entire body, surrounding the front, back and sides of your torso (in this case, a spare tire is a good thing).
- Utilizing the breathing pattern discussed above, draw in a steady breath to the count of three.
- Hold the breath for a three count, but try to stay as relaxed as possible while holding the breath. Think of it as being “suspended” in your body, and not “held”.
- Now, breathe out, deeply and slowly from the stomach, to the count of five.
- Wait for a three count.
- Repeat the entire pattern 3-5 times.

**Leg Raises:** Focus on completing it once at some point during the day. I suggest completing it in the morning as part of a stretching routine.

- Lie down on a flat, somewhat solid surface (i.e., not a bed). During the entire drill, try not to let your low back “arch” off the ground. This may require forcefully keeping the bellybutton pressed down.
- While fully inhaling, slowly raise the right leg as close to 90 degrees as possible. Attempt to inhale slowly enough to where you can continue to inhale for a count of three when the leg reaches 90 degrees.
- After the three count, fully exhale while slowly lowering the leg.
- Repeat the exercise with your left leg.
- Now repeat the exercise with both legs.
- Complete this entire sequence 3-5 times.

**Runner’s Salutations:** This drill incorporates some of the core principles of Yoga. This is a perfect drill to do immediately prior to your long run as part of your warm-up

- Stand with your feet together and your arms at your side. Take a deep breath. Bring arms up over your head with the palms together. Tilt your head back, and look toward your thumbs, pressing your hips slightly forward. Tighten your thighs and buttocks. Do not arch your back.
- Exhale (remember the diaphragmatic breathing). Bend your knees slightly, bringing your palms to the floor alongside your feet. Tuck your head into your knees. Inhale. While maintaining this position, raise your head, look up and lift your chest.
- Exhale. Walk your legs back until your body is straight like a plank. Drop down into a push-up position. If this is too difficult to hold, you can drop into a modified knee push-up position.
- Inhale. Push your torso off the ground with your arms, keep your legs and feet on the ground (tops of the feet should be facing down) and raise your head, looking up at the ceiling.
- Exhale. Adjust your feet so that your toes are on the ground and pick the butt towards the ceiling into a capital letter A position, pushing the heels backwards and the palms forward.
- Bend knees, and step forward to the second position listed above, then inhale and stand into the first position.
- Repeat this sequence three times before your next run. Eventually work up to 6-8 repetitions.

<http://pacificfit.net/article-archive/breathing-relaxation-for-endurance-athletes/>

## Yoga for Runners

Studies have shown that yoga squashes stress, aids weight loss, eases pain, helps people stick to an exercise routine, and even improves running times. The strength and flexibility developed on the mat--namely in the core, quads, hamstrings, and hip flexors--can help you run more efficiently and stay injury-free.

### *Exercise*

- Each pose should be done in a slow and controlled manner, without bouncing or forcing, which can cause your muscles to tighten, increasing your risk of injury. Stretch in a slow, steady motion to the point of "mild discomfort." If you are stretching to the point of pain, you have stretched too far.
- This routine can be integrated into a post-run stretching routine. You can also do it any time of day. If you're not doing the stretches immediately following a workout, I recommend a 10-minute cardio warm-up before starting this routine. Warm muscles are easier to stretch.
- These poses and the accompanying photos are modified for people with tight hips and hamstrings, which is common among runners.
- A breath is one full inhalation and one full exhalation through the nose. Hold each pose for five breaths, or longer if you'd like.

### **Butterfly/Cobbler Stretch**

This pose opens the groin and hips, stretching the inner thighs. Folding (leaning) forward in this post (explained below) also stretches the back. Sitting tall on your mat, bring the soles of your feet together. Interlace your fingers and place them around the toes. Sit tall, rolling the shoulders back, and gaze past the end of the nose. Lean forward for a deeper stretch, stopping when you start to "feel" the stretch. With every inhale, feel your spine growing longer (imagine the crown of your head reaching out in front of you to the wall); with every exhale, allow the body to sink lower (the chest is getting closer to the floor).

TIP: Use blocks under your knees if your hips are particularly tight.



### **Seated Wide Angle Forward Fold**



This pose stretches the hamstrings and calves; the forward fold straightens and lengthens the spine. From butterfly pose, extend your legs out to either side of you at a 90 degree angle. If you can straighten the legs, flex the feet and engage the quadriceps (by lifting your kneecap) to keep your knees from locking. Lean forward slightly and place your hands on the mat. With every inhale, feel your spine growing longer (imagine the crown of your



head reaching out in front of you to the wall); with every exhale, allow the body to sink lower (chest closer to the floor).

TIP: Bend your knees as much as you need to, and bring the legs closer together if needed.

### **Cow-Face Fold**

This pose is incredibly effective for stretching the piriformis, a small, hard-to-stretch muscle deep in your glutes, as well as your hips and IT band. The piriformis tends to become tight in runners.

From a seated position, bring your left foot back by your right hip; stack your right knee on top of your left, with your right foot by your left hip. (If your hips are tight, your top leg/knee might stand rather than lie flat—that's OK.) Grab your feet with your hands (left foot in right hand; right foot in left), and lean forward slightly, gazing past the end of your nose. For a deeper stretch, flex your feet. You can also place your hands on the floor in front of you and lean forward to intensify the stretch.

Repeat on the other side, with the left knee on top this time.

TIP: Make sure both hips stay on the ground in this pose.



### **Standing Wide-Legged Forward Fold**



Turn to the right and step your feet about a leg's length apart. Turn your heels slightly out and your toes slightly in. (Imagine you're slightly pigeon-toed.) Inhale and stand tall and stretch your arms out to a T (not pictured).

Exhale and fold forward, taking your hands to the floor or a yoga block. Allow your head to hang down, straightening your spine. Gaze past the end of your nose. After five breaths, inhale as you roll up slowly, engaging your abs and pressing in to your feet to help you rise.

Exhale and step your feet together. TIP: Keep your knees

slightly bent if your hamstrings are tight. If you straighten your legs, take care not to lock your knees. For a deeper stretch, engage the quadriceps by lifting up on your kneecap.

### **Figure 4 Pose**

This is a great way to stretch the outside of the hips and the inner thighs.

Lie on your back on the mat. Bring your knees in toward the chest, at a 90-degree angle. Place your right ankle on your left thigh, interlace your fingers and place them behind your left thigh, and pull your left thigh towards your chest. Hold for five breaths. Repeat on the other side. TIP: Flex your feet to deepen the stretch. Press your elbow against that bent knee to feel an inner thigh stretch. If you have knee problems, adjust the angle of the knee so you feel comfortable.



### Half Lord of the Fishes Twist



Open the shoulders, neck and hips, and stretch your IT band with this pose.

Sit tall with your legs extended in front of you. Cross your right foot over your left leg and stand it outside your left thigh. Bend your left knee, tucking your left foot by your right buttock. Place your right hand on the mat, just behind your buttock. Inhale and lift your left arm in the air by your left ear. Exhale and twist, bringing the left

elbow to the outside the right knee. Look back over the right shoulder. To release, inhale, look forward, release your arms and uncross your legs. Repeat on the other side. TIP: Let the twist start in your belly, not your neck.

### Seated Forward Fold

Stretch the spine, hamstrings and back.

Sit on your mat, with your legs extended in front of you, heels slightly flexed and bellybutton pulled to the spine for support. Inhale and sit tall and raise your arms in the air. Exhale and lean forward and reach for your toes. Allow your arms to rest on your thighs, shins or at your ankles. Allow your head to drop and gaze past the end of your nose. Allow your upper body to relax. If you can straighten the legs, flex the feet, and engage the quadriceps (by lifting your kneecap) to keep your knees from locking. With every inhale, feel your spine growing longer (imagine the crown of your head reaching out in front of you to the wall); with every exhale, allow the body to sink lower (the chest is getting closer to the floor). TIP: Can't reach your toes? Wrap a towel around your feet (pictured) and grab either end with your hands to improvise a yoga strap. If your hamstrings are tight, you can bend your legs.



[http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/fitness\\_articles.asp?id=1578](http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/fitness_articles.asp?id=1578)



## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

When we become stressed, our bodies engage in something called the "fight or flight response." The fight or flight response refers to changes that occur in the body when it prepares to either fight or run. These changes include increased heart rate, blood pressure, and rate of breathing, and a 300 - 400% increase in the amount of blood being pumped to the muscles. Over time, these reactions raise cholesterol levels, disturb intestinal activities, and depress the immune system. In general, they leave us feeling "stressed out."

However, we also possess the opposite of the fight or flight response -- the "relaxation response." This term refers to changes that occur in the body when it is in a deep state of relaxation. These changes include decreased blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and rate of breathing, as well as feelings of being calm and in control.

Relaxation techniques are helpful tools for coping with stress and promoting long-term health by slowing down the body and quieting the mind.

**Progressive muscle relaxation:** This technique involves slowly tensing and then releasing each muscle group individually, starting with the muscles in the toes and finishing with those in the head.

Physical relaxation has been named as one of the four basic mental techniques predominantly used in sport psychology interventions. Most research shows that strategies used to modify arousal state including relaxation techniques can reduce anxiety or reduce the interpretation of symptoms of performance anxiety as debilitating.

### *Exercise*

Find a comfortable spot to sit or lie down. Take a moment to remove your shoes and your watch if you're wearing one. And if any clothing feels as if it is tight around your body feel free to loosen it like your belt, or a tie, or your collar. And then get real comfortable on the floor or a chair. Wherever, you happen to be.

And take a nice slow deep breath, focusing all your attention on your breathing. And as you breathe, throughout this exercise, allow your stomach, not your chest, to expand. When you begin to expand your chest, you actually begin to place pressure on a bundle of nerves that begins to accentuate the stress response. In this exercise we're trying to enhance a relaxation response. So the best way to do this is to allow your stomach to rise up or extend out as you inhale, and then allow it to descend, come back in, as you exhale. And now with this in mind, take a nice slow deep breath, comfortably slow and comfortably deep. And let all thoughts, all interruptions, fade from your mind as you exhale.

Birrer & Morgan, 2010

## **Progressive muscle relaxation script**

Find yourself a quiet place to relax. Turn off your phone and dim the lights. This is your time...a time for complete and utter relaxation.

For this relaxation, you can either sit or lie down. Just make sure that you are warm enough, and that you are comfortable. Let your hands rest loosely in your lap, or by your side. Now close your eyes.

Become aware of your breathing, and notice how your abdomen rises and falls with each breath...

Now take a long slow deep breath in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach. Hold the breath for just a moment, and then exhale through your mouth. Allow your breath to carry away all stress and tension as the air floods out of your lungs.

Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment...and release the breath through your mouth. Empty your lungs completely.

Take a third deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, and then let it go. Feel that your body has already undergone a change. The tension in your body has begun to loosen and subside.

Now let your breathing rhythm return to normal...and relax....

During this relaxation I will ask you to tense various muscles throughout your body. Please do this without straining. You do not need to exert yourself, just contract each muscle firmly but gently as you breathe in. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can simply relax and breathe normally.

Bring your awareness to your feet and toes. Breathe in deeply through your nose, and as you do, gradually curl your toes down and tense the muscles in the soles of your feet. Hold your breath for just a few seconds and then release the muscles in your feet as you breathe out. Feel the tension in your feet wash away as you exhale. Notice how different your feet feel when tensed and when they are relaxed.

Take another deep breath in again, tense the muscles in the soles of your feet and hold this position for a few seconds.

Now release. Feel yourself relaxing more and more deeply with each breath. Your whole body is becoming heavier, softer and more relaxed as each moment passes.

Now bring your awareness to your lower legs...to your calf muscles. As you draw in a nice deep breath, point your toes up towards your knees and tighten these muscles. Hold for just a moment, and then let those muscles go limp as you exhale.

Once again, draw in a deep breath...and tighten your calf muscles. Hold for a few seconds, and then let it all go. Feel your muscles relax, and feel the tension washing away with your out-breath.

In a moment you will tense the muscles in the front of your thighs. If you are lying down, you can do this by trying to straighten your legs. You'll feel the muscles pulling your kneecap upwards. If you are seated, you can tense these muscles by pushing your heels down onto the floor.

Take a deep breath in, and tense the muscles in your thighs. Hold for just a moment, and then release everything. As you do this, the blood flow to your muscles increases, and you may notice a warm tingling sensation. Enjoy this feeling of soothing relaxation in your thighs.

Again, breathe in deeply and tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for a moment. Now release. Focus on letting your muscles go limp and loose.

Draw in a nice deep breath and gradually tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold this contraction for a few seconds, and then release your breath. Feel the tension leaving your muscles. Feel them relaxing completely.

Once more, breathe in deeply and tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold for a moment. Now release them. You are becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

Take another breath, and this time, gradually tighten all the muscles in your legs, from your feet to your buttocks. Do this in whatever way feels natural and comfortable to you. Hold it...and now release all these large strong muscles. Enjoy the sensation of release as you become even more deeply relaxed.

Now bring your awareness to your stomach. Draw in a nice deep breath and then tighten these muscles. Imagine you are trying to touch your belly button to your spine. Now release your breath and let your muscles relax. Notice the sensation of relief that comes from letting go.

Once again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your stomach muscles. Hold for a few seconds... and then let them relax as you exhale and release all tension.

Bring your awareness to the muscles in your back. As you slowly breathe in, arch your back slightly and tighten these muscles....Now release your breath and let your muscles relax. Again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your back muscles. Hold for a few seconds...and then let them relax and release.

Now give your attention to your shoulder muscles and the muscles in your neck. As you slowly draw in a nice deep breath, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze

these muscles firmly. Now breathe out completely, and allow your contracted muscles to go loose and limp.

Again, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Feel the heaviness in your body now. Enjoy the feeling. Feel yourself becoming heavier and heavier. Feel yourself becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

You are calm, secure, at peace.

Now it's time to let go of all the tension in your arms and hands. Let's start with your upper arms.

As you breathe in, raise your wrists towards your shoulders and tighten the muscles in your upper arms. Hold that breath and that contraction for just a moment...and then gently lower your arms and breathe all the way out. You may feel a warm, burning sensation in your muscles when you tighten them. Feel how relaxing it is to release that tightness and to breathe away all tension.

As you curl your upper arms again, tighten the muscles as you breathe in. Breathe in deeply. Now relax your arms and breathe out.

Now bring your awareness to your forearms. As you breathe in, curl your hands inwards as though you are trying to touch the inside of your elbows with your fingertips. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Again, take a deep breath in, and tighten the muscles in your forearms. Hold it for a moment, and then release them. Feel the tension washing away.

Now, take another breath in and tightly clench your fists. When you have finished breathing in, hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Notice any feelings of buzzing or throbbing. Your hands are becoming very soft and relaxed.

Take another deep breath in and clench your fists again. Hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Let your fingers go limp.

Your arms and hands are feeling heavy and relaxed.

Take a couple of nice long slow breaths now, and just relax. Feel yourself slipping even deeper into a state of complete rest.

Now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together. As you do, breathe in fully. Hold it...now breathe out and relax all your facial muscles. Feel your face softening.

Once more, breathe in deeply while you scrunch the muscles in your eyes and lips....and release.

Now bring your awareness to the muscles in your jaw. Take a deep breath in, and then open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel your jaw muscles stretching and tightening. Now exhale and allow your mouth to gently close.

Again, fill your lungs with air and then open your mouth wide. Now let your mouth relax and let your breath flood all the way out.

You are now completely relaxed from the tips of your toes to the top of your head. Please take a few more minutes to rest. Relax. Listen to the sound of your breathing and enjoy the lovely, warm sensation of physical relaxation. If you have the time, feel free to fall asleep. You will wake feeling completely rejuvenated and relaxed.

<http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/183466.pdf>

# progressive muscle relaxation

One of the body's reactions to fear and anxiety is muscle tension. This can result in feeling "tense", or can lead to muscle aches and pains, as well as leaving some people feeling exhausted. Think about how you respond to anxiety. Do you "tense up" when you're feeling anxious? Muscle relaxation can be particularly helpful in cases where anxiety is especially associated to muscle tension. This information sheet will guide you through a common form of relaxation designed to reduce muscle tension.

## Muscle tension

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth slightly so your jaw feels tight, or maybe your shoulders become. Muscle tension can also be associated with backaches and tension headaches.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practise this technique consistently.

### preparing for relaxation

When you are beginning to practice progressive muscle relaxation exercises keep in mind the following points.

- **Physical injuries.** If you have any injuries, or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.
- **Select your surroundings.** Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.
- **Make yourself comfortable.** Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.
- **Internal mechanics.** Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals, and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

### general procedure

- 1 Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
- 2 When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- 3 Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
- 4 When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

## Relaxation sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".
3. **Left hand and forearm.**
4. **Left upper arm.**
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
8. **Neck. !!!** Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg. !!!** Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

**Practice means progress.** Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.



# *Part Two: Energy/Emotional Management Techniques*



## **Self-Talk**

Self-talk has been described as 'the key to cognitive control' (Bunker, Williams and Zinsser, 1993) and is usually referring to internal dialogue, including thought content and self-statements (Hardy, Jones and Gould, 1998).

- Negative self-talk is associated with worse performance
- Positive self-talk is associated with better performance
- Positive self-talk may benefit an athlete by impacting on their self-confidence, anxiety control, concentration and mood
- Technical or instructional self-statements can also be used to initiate appropriate actions (such as using a cue word to trigger a particular movement), and are often provided by the coach in the form of feedback
- Neutral self-talk is often used by endurance athletes to dissociate from the rigors of their event

There are four main types of self-talk that are generally employed by athletes:

- Negative ('I'll never be any good at this')
- Positive ('That was fantastic')
- Technical or instructional ('Weight balanced and breathe')
- Neutral ('I wonder what is for lunch?' or imagining planning a holiday, etc.)

### **REALISTIC SELF-TALK**

1. This too shall pass and my life will be better.
2. I am a worthy and good person.
3. I am doing the best I can, given my history and level of current awareness.
4. Like everyone else, I will make mistakes and learn from them.
5. What is, is.
6. Look at how much I have accomplished, and I am still progressing.
7. There are no failures only different degrees of success.
8. Be honest and true to myself.
9. It is okay to let myself be distressed for awhile.
10. I am not helpless. I can and will take the steps needed to get through this crisis.
11. I will remain engaged and involved instead of isolating and withdrawing during this situation.
12. This is an opportunity, instead of a threat. I will use this experience to learn something new, to change my direction, or to try a new approach.
13. One step at a time.
14. I can stay calm when talking to difficult people.
15. I know I will be okay no matter what happens.
16. He/She is responsible for their reaction to me.
17. This difficult/painful situation will soon be over.
18. I can stand anything for a while.
19. In the long run who will remember, or care?

20. Is this really important enough to become upset about?
21. I don't really need to prove myself in this situation.
22. Other people's opinions are just their opinions.
23. Others are not perfect, and I won't put pressure on myself by expecting them to be.
24. I cannot control the behaviors of others; I can only control my own behavior.
25. I am not responsible to make other people okay.
26. I will respond appropriately, and not be reactive.
27. I feel better when I don't make assumptions about the thoughts or behavior of others.
28. I will enjoy myself, even if life is hard.
29. I will enjoy myself while catching up on all I want to accomplish.
30. Don't sweat the small stuff - it's small stuff.
31. My past does not control my future.
32. I choose to be a happy person.
33. I am respectful to others and deserve to be respected in return.
34. There is less stress in being optimistic and choosing to be in control.
35. I am willing to do whatever is necessary to make tomorrow better.

## **Thought Stopping**

Thought stopping is a simple three-step technique to change your negative self-talk into positive or technical self-talk:

1. Recognize that you need to change the way you are thinking
2. Say 'stop' to yourself, and include a physical action if desired, such as clicking your fingers
3. Replace the negative thinking with a constructive self-statement such as 'who has the ball?' or 'fast hands', and then perform that action.

## **Reframing**

Reframing is a skill used to interpret situations in a more positive way. It is also referred to as *cognitive restructuring*. Reframing can be used to transform weakness or difficulty into strength or opportunity. Reframing involves first acknowledging the problem or challenge, then interpreting the situation in a more positive light.

Examples:

- "I'm feeling nervous. Good! That just means I'm ready."
- "I'm up against some serious competition. Great! This should push me to perform my best."

## **Countering**

Countering is a skill that may be used when the athlete is unable to change a negative thought to a positive one, or because they don't fully believe the positive statement. Countering involves the using past evidence and logic to argue against beliefs underlying negative thoughts.

Examples:

- A high-jumper is nervous about scratching a jump, but reminds herself that she has cleared this height with ease multiple times in practice.
- Before the start of a race, a marathoner thinks "I don't know if I am ready for this." Catching this negative thought, he recalls the mileage he accomplished in training and the hard workouts he completed to be prepared for the race.

*Exercises*

### **Self-Talk Exercise: Thought Stopping Form**

1. Describe a situation in which you often tend to think/talk negatively to yourself.
2. Identify the negative statement you say to yourself.
3. Identify words or thoughts you can use to help you stop the negative thought.
4. List positive, beneficial statements you can use to replace your negative, harmful thoughts. These should be meaningful to you. (Should focus on what you need to DO to perform well).
5. Practice! Practice! Practice this technique while training.

### **Self-Talk Exercise: Re-Framing Negative Thoughts to Positive Thoughts**

Identify the negative and positive thoughts that you have in practice, before a competition and during a competition. Make sure you examine the differences carefully. If you do not have any positive thoughts, work on re-framing your negative thoughts into positive ones.

Thoughts I have in practice...

Negative Thoughts	Positive Thoughts

Thoughts I have before competition...

Negative Thoughts	Positive Thoughts

Thoughts I have during competition...

Negative Thoughts	Positive Thoughts

### **Self-Talk Exercise: Countering Negative Thoughts**

Choose three negative thoughts identified from the previous exercise, and practice refuting them with the countering technique. If no negative thoughts were identified, try to think of hypothetical examples or thoughts that you have heard others express that could be countered.

**Negative Thought 1:**

**Counter Thought 1:**

**Negative Thought 2:**

**Counter Thought 2:**

**Negative Thought 3:**

**Counter Thought 3:**

Bunker, L., Williams, J., and Zinsser, N. (1993)

# Self-Confidence

## 6 Sources of Self-Confidence

- **Performance accomplishments** are the strongest contributor to sport confidence. When you perform any skill successfully, you will generate confidence and be willing to attempt something slightly more difficult. Skill learning should be organized into a series of tasks that progress gradually and allow you to master each step before progressing on to the next. Personal success breeds confidence.
- **Being involved with the success of others** can also significantly bolster your confidence, especially if you believe that the performer you are involved with (e.g. a running partner) closely matches your own qualities or abilities. In effect, it evokes the reaction: "if they can do it, I can do it".
- **Verbal persuasion** is a means of attempting to change the attitudes and behavior of those around us, and this includes changing their self-confidence. An athlete might reinforce this by repeating the message over and over to him or herself as a form of self-persuasion. A tip here is to avoid stating what you want in the negative; so, rather than "I really don't want to run" try "I get to go for a run". Accordingly, your mind will not need to consider what is not required in order to arrive at what is.
- **Imagery experiences** have to do with athletes recreating multi-sensory images of successful performance in their mind. Through creating such mental representations, mastery of a particular task or set of circumstances is far more likely. What you see is what you get
- **Physiological states** can reduce feelings of confidence through phenomena such as muscular tension, palpitations and butterflies in the stomach. The bodily sensations associated with competition need to be perceived as being facilitative to performance.
- **Emotional states** is the final source of self-confidence and relates to how you control the emotions associated with competition, such as excitement and anxiety. Very often, the importance of the occasion creates self-doubt, which is why it is essential to control your thoughts and emotions.

### *Exercises*

#### **Exercise 1**

To achieve a greater sense of stability in your confidence, it is necessary to know exactly what causes it to fluctuate. Divide a clean page into two columns. Label the first column 'High-confidence situations' and the second 'Low-confidence situations'.

In the first column, list all of the situations or circumstances in your sport in which you feel completely confident. In the second column, list the situations or circumstances that sometimes cause your confidence to diminish. Clearly identifying the situations that make you feel uneasy is the first step towards building greater self-confidence. This should serve as a way to increase your awareness of areas that can be improved.



HIGH-CONFIDENCE SITUATIONS	LOW-CONFIDENCE SITUATIONS

## Exercise 2

This exercise recreates the mental state associated with past performance success and will help you in bridging the gap between your ability and confidence:

- Imagine a huge spotlight beaming down on the floor one meter in front of you. The light beam is about a meter in diameter
- Now think back to a time in your sporting career when you were performing at the very peak of your ability - perhaps using the first column from Exercise 1 to guide you. Each movement you made brought about a successful outcome and everything just seemed to flow without much conscious effort.
- In a dissociated state (i.e. looking at yourself from the outside) examine each of your five senses. See yourself inside the circle and excelling. Imagine exactly what the 'you' inside the circle is seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling. Notice the 'taste of success' in your mouth.
- Now step into the spotlight and become fully associated so that you are experiencing events through your own eyes and in real time. Again, notice what you are seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting.

- Notice exactly what this feels like so that you can reproduce it at will whenever your confidence is waning.

Karageorghis, C. (2007)

## **Pre-Performance Routines**

Managing energy and emotion prior to competition is essential to setting the stage for successful performance. Just as it is important to warm up muscles before a race, warming up the mind is necessary for running strong and relaxed from the start. A pre-performance routine is “a sequence of task relevant thoughts and actions which an athlete engages in systematically prior to his or her performance of a specific sport skill,” and can serve as a sort of mental warm-up prior to an event.

### *Managing Arousal Level*

Arousal can negatively affect performance when it is overabundant (i.e., anxiety is high) or inadequate (i.e., too relaxed). Excessively high arousal is more common in athletes, and can be the culprit of pre-race jitters than many runners feel before toeing the start line. High anxiety can be managed by incorporating some of the techniques described elsewhere in this workbook, including yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, and deep breathing. While less common, under-arousal can also have a negative impact on performance. For example, a runner who is not “psyched up” for a race may have a sluggish start and have difficulty finding the appropriate pace and effort level, resulting in lost time. Athletes with this problem may turn to imagery, self-talk, or upbeat music to help them get into the appropriate frame of mind to compete.

### *Keys to Effective Pre-Performance Routines*

As with any other mental skill, pre-performance routines should be practiced regularly and integrated into training for best results. Additionally, it is important to distinguish between superstition and pre-performance routines. Pre-performance routines are ideally comprised of thoughts that allow an athlete to execute a particular skill as well as physical actions that are specific to the task at hand (for example, running striders or doing high-knees). On the other hand, superstitions are not relevant to the task at hand and are often so rigid that the thought of not adhering to them causes anxiety in athletes. The routine should be flexible enough that it can develop over time to be more helpful to your performance, and able to be worked around or adjusted in the event that there is not enough time to complete it.

Hebert, 2008; Kelly, 2013; Pineschi & Di Pietro, 2013

### *Exercise*

In the space below, write out your current pre-performance routine if you have one. Consider: does it help you achieve the ideal arousal level for your performance? Is it specific to the task at hand?

If you do not have a pre-performance routine that works for you, consider the following questions and use your responses to plan a pre-performance routine.

- How much time do you need to “center” yourself, and put the rest of your life aside?
- What specifically do you do to “let go” of everything other than the task at hand?
- How do you see your event unfolding? What is your plan?
- What will you do if things go badly at some point during your event? What can you say to yourself to get yourself through?
- What self-talk statements put you in a positive and productive frame of mind?

After you’ve created your pre-performance routine, practice going through it before training runs. Reflect on it regularly in your training log, noting how it affects your running and whether it might need to be adjusted as you progress.

Hebert, 2008

# *Part Three: Other Mental Skills*



## Goal-Setting

Goals are defined simply as benchmarks, which individuals strive to achieve. While goal-setting is practiced by virtually every kind of athlete, it is especially instrumental for runners since goals typically guide training programs. For example, if a runner's goal is to qualify for the Boston Marathon, then the distance and goal finish time will dictate weekly mileage, types of workouts included, and pace for speedwork sessions within the training plan. But while this type of goal is a guidepost for training, runners need to be aware of different types of goals that they should set to ensure the best possibility for success in their training and in races.

### *Performance Goals vs. Process Goals*

Training for a particular event is typically associated with *performance goals* – whether it be finishing a race in a certain time or even being the overall winner. While these goals can be valuable for pushing a runner to train hard and give full effort during a race, it is important to note that performance goals can be affected by many factors beyond the runner's control. For example, wind and wet, slippery conditions could get in the way of setting a personal best in a race, or an unusually fast field could put a runner out of contention for victory. Thus, it is beneficial for runners to set *process goals* which are based on factors that are more controllable.

Hammermeister, 2010

Process goals are concerned with developing the four main components that help to determine athletic performance. These components are:

- Technical abilities
- Tactical proficiency
- Physical capacity
- Psychological skills

Setting process goals involves goal-setting to address each of these key areas. When incorporated into training, the runner is provided with additional motivation that comes from achieving controllable, short term goals while developing areas that will help them to meet their performance goals. Addressing all four of these areas on a regular basis will aid a runner in being successful on race day.

### *Exercise*

Complete the following four pages to practice setting technical, tactical, physical, and psychological goals. You may choose to work on these particular goals for the duration of your training, or you may set new ones if you feel that you have met the initial ones. In any case, you should make an effort to revisit these goals on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or daily). If you keep a training log, consider writing a regular reflection on your goals and how you've made progress on them.

## **Goal-Setting – Technical Goal**

**What is a technical goal you want to accomplish?** *Specific skills, e.g., foot turnover, form*

**What specifically will you do to work towards this goal?**

**Come up with commitment strategies that will help you adhere to your plan. Who or what will hold you accountable?**

**What barriers might you face that will stop you from achieving this goal? Come up with a plan of action that will help you to get past the barrier.**

Barrier(s):

Plan(s) for action:

**How will you measure your progress towards this goal? Who or what will provide feedback on how you have progressed towards your goal?**

**How will you evaluate goal achievement?**

**How will you reward yourself for making progress toward your goal? If you don't have any specific reward, what is it that drives you towards achieving this goal? What will you do if you don't achieve this goal?**



## **Goal-Setting – Tactical Goal**

**What is a tactical goal you want to accomplish?** *E.g., negative splitting, picking off competitors*

**What specifically will you do to work towards this goal?**

**Come up with commitment strategies that will help you adhere to your plan. Who or what will hold you accountable?**

**What barriers might you face that will stop you from achieving this goal? Come up with a plan of action that will help you to get past the barrier.**

Barrier(s):

Plan(s) for action:

**How will you measure your progress towards this goal? Who or what will provide feedback on how you have progressed towards your goal?**

**How will you evaluate goal achievement?**

**How will you reward yourself for making progress toward your goal? If you don't have any specific reward, what is it that drives you towards achieving this goal? What will you do if you don't achieve this goal?**

## **Goal-Setting – Physical Goal**

**What is a physical goal you want to accomplish? *E.g., long run mileage, speedwork paces***

**What specifically will you do to work towards this goal?**

**Come up with commitment strategies that will help you adhere to your plan. Who or what will hold you accountable?**

**What barriers might you face that will stop you from achieving this goal? Come up with a plan of action that will help you to get past the barrier.**

Barrier(s):

Plan(s) for action:

**How will you measure your progress towards this goal? Who or what will provide feedback on how you have progressed towards your goal?**

**How will you evaluate goal achievement?**

**How will you reward yourself for making progress toward your goal? If you don't have any specific reward, what is it that drives you towards achieving this goal? What will you do if you don't achieve this goal?**

## **Goal-Setting – Psychological Goal**

**What is a psychological goal you want to accomplish? *E.g., improve focus, manage pre-race jitters***

**What specifically will you do to work towards this goal?**

**Come up with commitment strategies that will help you adhere to your plan. Who or what will hold you accountable?**

**What barriers might you face that will stop you from achieving this goal? Come up with a plan of action that will help you to get past the barrier.**

Barrier(s):

Plan(s) for action:

**How will you measure your progress towards this goal? Who or what will provide feedback on how you have progressed towards your goal?**

**How will you evaluate goal achievement?**

**How will you reward yourself for making progress toward your goal? If you don't have any specific reward, what is it that drives you towards achieving this goal? What will you do if you don't achieve this goal?**

Hammermeister, 2010

## Imagery

Imagery is defined as “the conscious representation of an event, person, object, or situation.” While the term is often used interchangeably with visualization, imagery involves more than just seeing mental pictures; it is a polysensory experience in which an athlete is able to see, hear, feel, and even taste a performance situation.

### *Uses for Imagery*

Imagery can help runners prepare for events by essentially allowing them to rehearse and strategize beforehand. It may be used to provide motivation, correct a mistake, enhance focus, or familiarize a runner with a course or competition scenario. Although imagery does not involve being physically active, it does involve a concerted mental effort that can actually program muscles to perform if done repeatedly and effectively. Runners who become skilled in imagery are even able to image an entire race in real-time. In order for imagery to be effective, the following qualities must be considered:

- *Vividness*: how real the image is in terms of engaging all of the senses
- *Controllability*: being able to image a successful performance

Imagery is only effective if it is vivid and controllable. For instance, if a runner sees and feels himself “hitting the wall” or being out-kicked at the finish line during an imagery session, then he may actually be programming himself to fail. Conversely, if he can redirect the image to where he is relaxed and running strong, then he is preparing himself to repeat the performance in an actual competition.

*Tips for Effective Imagery Practice: The PETTLEP Model (Adapted from Homes & Collins, 2001)*

**Physical** – is the task one that requires being relatively relaxed (e.g., archery) or one that requires high activation (e.g., Olympic lifting)? You may need to get more relaxed or more energized prior to your imagery session. Going through movements as you image may help make your imagery seem closer to the real thing.

**Environment** – imagine the environment you will be competing in, use pictures or video if it's a venue you've never competed at before.

**Task** – athletes in form based sports (e.g., diving) often find an external imagery perspective to be most beneficial. Athletes in interactive sports (e.g., soccer) sometimes find an internal imagery perspective to be more useful. The task demands will also differ depending on the skill level of the athlete; your coach will be able to help you identify what aspects of a task you should be focusing on as a novice, intermediate or elite athlete.

**Timing** – your imagery of a sport skill, routine, event, etc. should take the same amount of time as it does to physically perform (e.g., if it takes 24 seconds to run 200m the imagery should take 24 seconds too).

**Learning** – your images should change as your skill level improves. If you've changed technique your imagery should change to match the new technique.

**Emotion** – imagery is more effective and closer to experiencing the real thing when you incorporate emotions or attach meaning to the images. For example, when you're imaging yourself achieving a goal, feel the pride you would experience when your coach and others congratulate you.

**Perspective** - try using both perspectives to find the one that works better for you and your sport. Athletes will often switch between perspectives. Notice that perspective is closely linked to the demands of the task.

Carter, 2013; Leslie-Toogood, Hammond, & Gregg, 2010

### *Exercises*

Imagery practice is often facilitated by a script. The following pages provide scripts that you can modify to be specific to you and your training.

1. Determine what purpose you would like imagery to serve: rehearsing a skill, enhancing motivation, enhancing confidence, or managing emotions.
2. Identify the appropriate script provided in the following pages.
3. Modify the script to fit the issue or scenario that you would like to address. Each scenario should be about 3-4 minutes in length.
4. Record the script and load it onto a listening device; this enables you to be able to practice imagery easily wherever you are and whenever it is most convenient for you.
5. Try to practice imagery two to three times per day over the course of several weeks.
6. Keep a log of your imagery sessions to track progress. You may choose to incorporate it into your training log, or you can use the template provided.

## **Developing Foundational Imagery Skills**

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Pick a familiar object in the room ..... Focus on every detail of this object; look at the shape and colour ..... Close your eyes and imagine you are still looking at the object; see clearly all of the details, all of the shapes and colours ..... Now open your eyes and compare your image with the real object ..... Close your eyes again and see the object with its colour and detail.
2. Now imagine your house, you are standing outside at the front of your house, notice the colours, the windows, and all of the details.....Walk to the front door, notice how the house seems to grow larger as you get closer.....Put your hand on the door handle.....Open the door and walk into your house.....Walk through your house to the doorway of your bedroom.....See the colours of the walls, the furniture, the windows, and the floor.....Notice all of the details as you look around your room.....Now turn around and walk back to the front door of your house.....Open the door and walk out, turn around and look back at your house.
3. Picture a beautiful warm summer's day and you are sitting on a beach.....See yourself lie down and feel the warmth of the sand.....As you lie there quietly feel the warm sun shining down on you.....Hear the sound of the water as the waves wash up onto the shore.....Feel a slight cool breeze blow over you.....As you lie on the sand you feel warm and relaxed.
4. Let your hands rest at your sides, squeeze your fists and notice how your hands and forearms feel.....Do you feel the tension in your hands and forearms? .....Stop



squeezing and image those feelings in your hands and forearms.....What sensations did you pick up on?

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## Rehearsal of Sport Skills

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Imagine a door familiar to you (such as the front door of your house). Picture the colour and texture of the door...you are about to open the door and reach out for the door handle, feel the muscles in your hand and forearm flex as they grip the handle, notice the coolness of the metal from the door handle...as you turn the handle use your weight to push the door open.
2. Imagine you are running during a competition in your sport, preparing to do a skill specific to your sport (e.g., taking a shot, making a pass, striking a ball, doing a jump)...see your knees come up high toward your chest and your heels extend behind you as you run quickly and smoothly, your heart is beating and your arms are pumping...you are feeling strong and fast...see yourself quickly get into position and then transition into the sport specific skill...you perform the skill efficiently and the outcome is just what you wanted (e.g., you made the shot, you got an assist, you connected with the ball, you jumped high).
3. Imagine a strategy of play/game plan/race plan/routine that you've been working on recently in training...see yourself go through the plan and perform it well in practice...now imagine you are in a competition and about to perform the plan, you're feeling a bit nervous and your hands might be a little bit sweaty as you are anxious to do well...see yourself take a deep breath, focus on what you need to do, and execute the plan just as in training...your plan has made a difference to the competition and you celebrate your accomplishment.

4. See yourself in a competitive situation in your sport where you need to decide what strategy of play/game plan/race plan/routine would work best... you run through a few scenarios in your head, going through different options and seeing the most likely outcomes...you confidently select the best option and then carry it out successfully.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## Enhancing Motivation

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Take a moment to imagine an outcome goal that you really want to achieve, for example winning a gold medal or breaking a record.....Now imagine what you will have to do to get there.....Picture yourself working hard during a training session.....Picture yourself improving with practice.....See yourself having great performances.....Now see yourself achieve your goal.
2. Imagine yourself during a training session.....you are really being pushed today and are having a hard time working through it, you want to give up and rest.....Now see yourself work through the difficulty and pain you are feeling.....With every repetition you perform you imagine yourself getting closer and closer to a gold medal.....With every repetition you perform you imagine outperforming all of your opponents and winning a gold medal.....As you are going through your workout you realize how pumped you are now.
3. Imagine yourself at your training venue.....You are working with your coach on a particular skill or technique that needs to be improved, you know that making this change will be difficult but will help you reach your performance goals.....See yourself going through the repetitions while making corrections.....At the end of the training session you feel satisfied in the effort you put in and the result of the improvements.
4. Imagine yourself at a championship competition in your sport.....There are only a few seconds left and you realize you are about to win.....You feel your heart beat faster and butterflies in your stomach as the anticipation builds.....Then finally it is over and you have won.....Picture how you will react to knowing you have

won.....Experience the emotions you are feeling.....Experience the sights and sounds around you.

5. Picture yourself at a championship competition in your sport.....See yourself standing in your uniform about to receive your medal.....Allow yourself to experience the emotions you are feeling.....Imagine yourself looking at the scene around you.....Picture yourself react when your name is announced as the champion.....See yourself bend forward and feel the medal placed around your neck.....Picture and feel the huge smile that is across your face.....Allow yourself to experience all of the thoughts and emotions you are feeling as a champion.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## **Enhancing Confidence: Session 1**

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Recall a previous competition where you were in a difficult situation and performed poorly as a result.....Imagine yourself back in this situation, picture the competition venue you were at and the skill or play you needed to make.....Experience the emotions you felt.....Now clear your mind and picture yourself back in this difficult situation.....See yourself remaining confident and in control.....See yourself respond positively and have a great performance.
2. Imagine yourself feeling really great, performing really well during an important competition in your sport.....However, you lose focus and begin to think ahead, becoming careless making a number of silly mistakes.....You begin to feel tense and in a panic to turn it around.....Imagine yourself refocusing and remaining confident.....You refocus on your process and fully commit to each skill or play you make.....Now see yourself at the competition totally focused, having a great performance.
3. See yourself at an important competition, performing very well.....As the competition progresses, you are in a great position to win..... As you are performing, your movements are flowing, you feel totally focused and in your zone.....Being in control during this situation increases your confidence.....Picture yourself being self-confident, having great posture, your head held high, excited to be competing.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## Enhancing Confidence: Session 2

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Picture a situation at an important competition where you are competing against the top athlete in your sport .....You are feeling intimidated and anxious, you feel like you have to prove yourself.....See yourself remaining in control and confident during this situation.....Remember you are a very good athlete and are capable of being successful.....See yourself focus on competing for yourself, not anyone else.....Now see yourself during the competition performing well, not caring what anyone else thinks.
2. Picture a situation where you are feeling pressure to play well and are worried about what others will think if you don't play well.....See yourself remaining in control and confident during this situation.....You focus on having a great performance and competing for yourself, not anyone else .....See yourself at the competition making all the right moves and feel great.
3. Imagine a situation where you have given 100% effort during a competition, for example you really had to grind to get through the day.....You had to work harder than usual.....At the end of the competition you realize you are physically exhausted.....You feel satisfied that you put in your best effort.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

### **Enhancing Confidence: Session 3**

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Take a moment to think of a very bad break in your sport. For example a referee making a bad call against you, making a mistake while performing a skill, or anything that may have rattled you in the past.....Now picture a situation where you are performing exceptionally well.....You are feeling great.....Then all of a sudden you catch a very bad break.....See yourself remain calm and in control during this difficult situation.....You refocus on your process and remind yourself you are a great athlete and can handle this situation.....Now see yourself responding effectively and performing expertly again.
2. Imagine you are performing a drill during practice in your sport that is very difficult.....Notice your frustration as you attempt to do the drill properly.....Now imagine yourself starting to complete the drill successfully.....Notice your satisfaction as you see and feel yourself performing the entire drill correctly.
3. Imagine yourself at an important competition.....Your opponents have been successful in the past and you will need to be “on” to beat them.....As you look around the competition venue you see others that you have competed against in the past when you were successful.....As you remind yourself that you deserve to be in the competition you feel your back straighten and your head being held high as you regain your confidence in yourself.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.



## **Managing Emotion and Arousal: Session 1**

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Imagine yourself getting ready to begin an important competition.....You have just finished your warm-up and now are sitting down listening to music during the final few minutes before the competition begins.....As you are sitting, you notice feeling some “butterflies in your stomach” .....You notice your hands are a bit cold.....Your heart is beating a little quickly.....You know these feelings mean that you are a little bit excited, this is a good thing, and you are ready to compete.
2. Imagine yourself at an important competition.....During a break in play you notice how loose and relaxed you feel.....Your breathing is deep and rhythmical.....Mentally you feel at ease and are focused only on what you have to do.....See yourself getting a drink of water, as you put your bottle down you notice you are feeling relaxed and ready to go.
3. Imagine yourself at an important competition.....You feel very fatigued physically and mentally.....but you can imagine yourself overcoming these feelings and giving your full effort.....Your muscles feel heavy and tired.....but you feel yourself starting to become more energized.....See yourself pick up the pace and perform with extra effort.....Notice how your mood lifts and you observe more of your surroundings.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## **Managing Emotion and Arousal: Session 2**

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Imagine yourself at an important competition ..... During a break you notice you are feeling slow, tired and groggy.....You aren't really feeling into the competition.....Now see yourself beginning to energize.....You challenge yourself to compete hard.....You start to feel your heart start beating faster.....You tell yourself to get going, to wake up, you have the ability to win this competition so get out there and make it happen.....You are now feeling pumped, ready to compete at an optimal level.
2. Imagine yourself at a very important competition.....You feel as though your activation is at an optimal level.....Now notice and feel how you are breathing.....Notice how your muscles feel.....You are feeling a sense of excitement and anticipation within yourself, yet feel calm and in control.....Now see yourself during the competition having a great performance.
3. Imagine yourself at an important competition.....During the warm-up you are feeling concerned that you will not have a very good performance today.....You feel tense in your stomach and muscles, your heart is beating faster.....Now see yourself remain calm and in control.....You remind yourself that you have trained hard and are capable of having a great performance.....As you remind yourself you can feel your muscles and stomach relax.....You can feel your heart slow down.....Now picture yourself starting the competition feeling excited and ready to go.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## Managing Emotion and Arousal: Session 3

Find a comfortable position: standing, sitting or lying down. You are about to go through a guided imagery script. You will be led through each scenario one at a time. As you are listening, imagine yourself in each situation and fully experience the emotions created. If you feel there is not enough time to imagine each part of the scenario, feel free to pause your listening device, fully picture the scene and then press play to resume listening. To start, close your eyes. Relax by taking a few deep breaths in; feeling the tension release from your body as you relax.

1. Imagine yourself at an important competition ..... You have just started the competition and you make a silly mistake.....You feel very angry and upset, your body tenses and you begin to worry about what will happen next.....Now see yourself remain calm and in control.....See yourself flex then shake your muscles to relax and calm down.....You take several deep breaths in and feel much better.....You remind yourself that you are a great athlete and can do it.....Now see yourself refocus and have an awesome performance.
2. Recall a situation in the past where you were having an excellent performance.....What was the competition venue like.....Notice your opponents or other athletes you were competing against.....Now picture yourself having an expert performance.....Now notice how you are breathing, how your muscles feel and how good you feel.
3. Recall a previous situation where you were feeling very tired, slow and not in to the competition and then didn't do very well.....Imagine yourself back in this situation, picture the venue you were at, your opponents or other athletes you were competing against.....Experience the emotions you felt.....Now clear your mind and picture yourself back in this difficult situation.....See yourself remaining calm and in control.....see yourself energizing and getting pumped up.....You challenge yourself to have a great performance.....You listen to some exciting music and feel your pulse quicken, you are now feeling excited.....Now see yourself having an awesome performance and having fun.

4. Recall a previous situation where you were feeling very nervous and then didn't play very well.....Imagine yourself back in this situation; picture the venue you were at, your opponents or other athletes you were competing against.....Experience the emotions you felt.....Now clear your mind and picture yourself back in this difficult situation.....See yourself remaining calm and in control.....See yourself relaxing before the competition, taking a few relaxing deep breaths in and remind yourself, you can do this.....You are now feeling calm .....Now see yourself having an awesome performance and having fun.

That is the conclusion of this imagery session. You may begin slowly activating your body and mind. At your own pace, take a nice relaxing deep breath in and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

## Imagery Training Logbook

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What time did you practice your imagery script?

Where were you when you practiced your imagery script?

	Not At All	Somewhat	Moderately So	Very Much So
1. Rate how well you saw yourself in these situations.	1	2	3	4
2. Rate how well you heard the sounds in these situations.	1	2	3	4
3. Rate how well you “felt” making the movements.	1	2	3	4
4. Rate how well you felt the emotions in the situations.	1	2	3	4
5. Did you image from inside your body? If so, rate how well you were able to see the image from inside your body.	1	2	3	4
6. Did you image from outside your body? If so, rate how well you were able to see the image from outside your body.	1	2	3	4
7. Rate how well you controlled the image.	1	2	3	4

Leslie-Toogood, Hammond, & Gregg, 2010

Evaluation and Follow-Up

Athletes: Think about the mental training exercises (Relaxation, Energy and Emotional Management, and other Mental Skills) you completed during this program. Reflect upon the pros and cons of each exercise. Find which elements were more beneficial for you and create your own personal mental skills routine below.


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