

Guide to Mental Training

How many people do you know who run from their problems? Our dreams are usually on the other side of our problems. Strength is only built through resistance. You are always doing what you want to do. No one is ever making you do anything. Life is a series of choices, but most people are unaware of all the choices available to them. It is vitally important that you understand this difference. When you realize that you have control over your choices, then you can make the choice to engage and engagement is powerful. You must realize that you are internally motivated and that it is not your coach's job, or anyone else's, to motivate you. It is your job. You started playing sports because you loved to play. Then you started practicing at sports because you wanted to get better. You have made these choices and you are not going to develop to your fullest if you do not make a choice to engage! Even if you do not like your coach, or your team, you still want to give 100% effort to become the best that you can be at this level, because it will prepare you for the next level. If you do not engage, you will limit your daily growth and it will diminish your chances at the next level.

-There are only two things you can control in life. Attitude and Effort

Research on Positivity

The latest scientific evidence tells us that positivity does not simply reflect success and health; it can also produce success and health. This means that even after positivity fades, we can find traces of its impact. Beyond the present, your positivity has downstream consequences for the direction of your life. Negative emotions narrow people's ideas about possible actions, positive emotions do the opposite. Scientists have shown that because positive and open mindsets produce exploration and experiential learning, you learn more when you feel upbeat and interested and are acting on your curiosity. Negativity and neutrality constrain your experience of the world. Positivity draws you out to explore the world in unexpected ways. Each time you do, you learn something. Even if what you learn may not be immediately useful, someday it may be a lifesaver.

Positivity Ratio

Positivity operates off a tipping point. You only see the increasing benefits when you are above a certain ratio. Negativity is good too. Negativity is stronger than positivity, though, so you want to reduce inappropriate or excessive negativity. You need a healthy balance, ideally somewhere between 3 to 1. As you create new habits of thought, you fundamentally rewire your brain. Over time and with continued effort and attention, you can teach your brain to think more

positively. Negative emotions like fear and anger can also spawn negative thinking. If you cannot avoid a situation or person that brings you needless negativity, you have options for reducing it. Modify the situation, focus on various aspects of the situation, decide if this person, or situation, could be a teacher in disguise. Is the good and bad always available in any situation?

Working on your own reactions in a mindful way may even remove some of the fuel that flames the negativity.

Meeting Needs

Certainty

Uncertainty/Variety

Connection

Spiritual Needs

Every behavior we engage in is meeting these needs at some level. If negative behavior is meeting two or more needs, it is difficult to quit. You must find a replacement behavior, which is empowering and meets your needs at a greater level.

Happiness Binder

When a good event or circumstance happens in our lives, soak up as much of the good feelings and benefits from it as possible. Write about it and your feelings in a happiness binder.

Let's do an exercise

Write out all the characteristics of three people that you admire. Then, think about three people you really do not like and write out all their qualities. Make sure that one of each category is one of your teammates.

Think about yourself:

What kind of person do you want to be?

What kind of man or woman do you want to be?

What kind of athlete do you want to be?

Put these characteristics into sentences about yourself and incorporate them into your personal affirmations. Every moment you have a fresh set of choices in front of you about whether you are becoming more like the people you admire or farther away from them. Ultimately, where we end up in life and how people think about us is largely based off our choices over an extended period of time. It is never too late to start making new choices!

Do you know people that when you ask them how they are doing they say, "I'm fine" or "I'm ok"?

What does their life become? "fine" "ok"

When people ask how I'm doing, I almost always respond, "I'm excellent" or "I'm great" because I live in the United States of America, and even if I am living on the streets my quality of life is still 500 times greater than those around the world.

What Went Well Journal

Think about positive things that happened that day. Write those down each day. This helps you move your thinking into seeing the good things that happen each day instead of focusing on negatives which we all tend to do.

Positive Self-Talk

When you face adversity, talk to yourself the same way you would talk to your best friend in the same situation. You would be encouraging, supportive, loving and positive. Give yourself the same consideration. Simply telling yourself "It's going to be ok" is much better than telling yourself "That was a dumb thing to do" or "I'm so stupid."

80/20 Rule

Do your circumstances determine how you feel? Not if you focus on solutions and not problems. Eighty percent of your time should be spent on solutions; only 20% of your time should be spent on problems. Focus on what you and your coaches/friends/and family do well. Focus determines what you feel, and focus determines what you get more of.

Affirmations

Affirmations are a paragraph or two that you write out and you say over and over aloud, 3050 times a day. Studies indicate that our self-perception is established before we reach the age of five. Therefore, it is essential to renew our minds with affirmation and self-talk, so we are not viewing the world through the fearful eyes of a five-year old. The best time to make affirmations: When you wake up and right before falling asleep.

Recording and listening to your affirmations is immensely powerful. Skip the conscious mind and go directly to your subconscious.

Problems vs. Challenges

Write down your problems and then rewrite them as challenges and opportunities. Our dreams are usually on the other side of our problems. Strength is only built through resistance.

S.M.A.R.T Goals

SMART goals are written using the following guidelines being:

- 1) Specific – define exactly what is being pursued
- 2) Measurable – is there a number to track completion
- 3) Attainable - can the goal be achieved
- 4) Realistic – is the goal doable
- 5) Timely – can it be completed in reasonable amount of time

These five themes are shown to be extremely beneficial in choosing your goals and how to be most effective in approaching them. Appropriately set goals direct your attention to completing tasks, motivate you to give greater effort and persistence in performing tasks, and encourage growth.

Performance Goals

A performance goal is when you focus on achieving a personal standard for yourself. For example, a performance goal would be if you want to beat your mile time in your next track meet.

Process Goals

Process goals are the “stepping stones” to your goals. They are the small steps you take in the pursuit of the bigger goal ahead of you. For example, if your goal was to lose weight you would take small steps towards achieving that goal. You would not lose twenty pounds overnight.

You would set small process goals along the way and reach your weight loss goal after an extended period of time.

Practice Goals

As an athlete, you know how important practice is. Practice is vital in terms of improving every day at your respective sport. Practice goals are goals you set for each practice. Often these goals are small but give you something to focus on during practice and will also keep you focused.

For example, if you are a basketball player and you want to become a better free throw shooter, then you could set a practice goal of making twenty free throws in a row before you leave the gym.

"How do you stay focused, motivated and hopeful when you can't see the end? You must be able to create a different reality. It is up to each and every one of us to reach our full potential regardless of what is in our way. It is important to assess the situation that you are currently in and figure out how you can overcome. In these unprecedented times, it is easy to run that bath and soak in self-pity. Once you get going down that path, it is hard to return to reality. Make sure the conversation you are having with yourself is a positive one. One that keeps you focused and disciplined. The work never stops! As a human being you must always be evolving and able to adapt and overcome all obstacles!"

--David Goggins, United States Air Force, ultra-endurance athlete, triathlete, motivational speaker, author.

Mindset

General Mindset - how is your mindset at the beginning of the workout? Are you low energy or ready to work? How is your mindset at the end of the workout? Mirror it in or give max effort? How do you receive instructions? Are you questioning or open minded? Are you engaged? How do you interact with others? Are you detached or collaborative? What is your comprehension level? Do you understand the information? Are you totally lost or have it down? Sports are 70% mental.

Practice Mindfulness

Pay attention to and stay in the present moment without judgement.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

In conjunction with mindfulness, the therapy trains a person to accept difficult thoughts or feelings rather than actively working to get rid of them. Studies have shown that these tools can improve athletic performance, and more importantly, lead to a richer life off the court. Athletes are human beings first. Their lives are not all about winning medals or championships. Mindfulness and ACT help athletes learn more about themselves and engage differently with their thoughts and emotions. It teaches them to be better people.

Visual Affirmation

Watch and/or listen to people you admire or see as mentors when they discuss how they put their mental health first and manage mental challenges. Let their strategies guide you toward using some of the ones they talk about or finding similar ways to guard your mental health during stressful times. YouTube videos, twitter posts, internet searches and magazine articles all contain examples of these.

“Love the process, love the daily grind of it & putting the puzzle together” ~ Kobe Bryant

“It’s a grind and it has to be that way” ~ Kobe Bryant