

SAUGEEN MAITLAND SPORT PSYCHOLOGY MANUAL

PLAYERS EDITION

INSTALLMENT ONE



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INTRODUCTION TO SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Sport Psychology is a very important aspect of training. You most likely focus on your strength and conditioning on and off the ice already. But the mental aspect of the game is just as important and is what separates elite athletes from everyone else. Just like you go to the gym every week to work out and get stronger, faster, fitter, you must work your mind the same way. This is not a one-time session and you're set to go. You need to work hard and practice constantly to enable your mental game to take you further than you've ever gone on the ice.

There are several aspects associated with sports psychology. These are skills that will help you build self-confidence, increase your game skills, help you cope with injuries and recovery, deal with stress, and many other things. But for now, we will only focus on four things: motivation, goal setting, attention and concentration, and thought management. These can be worked on during your free time individually to reinforce your own skills as well as build a foundation for the team to work on group cohesion and team bonding so that you all can triumph personally and as a team.

It is important that you treat this as you would a workout at the gym. You will get out of it what you put in. Sometimes you might feel like it doesn't work, or you're not going anywhere, but so is the gym. You don't get results in a day or in a week. So stick with it and you'll notice the difference.

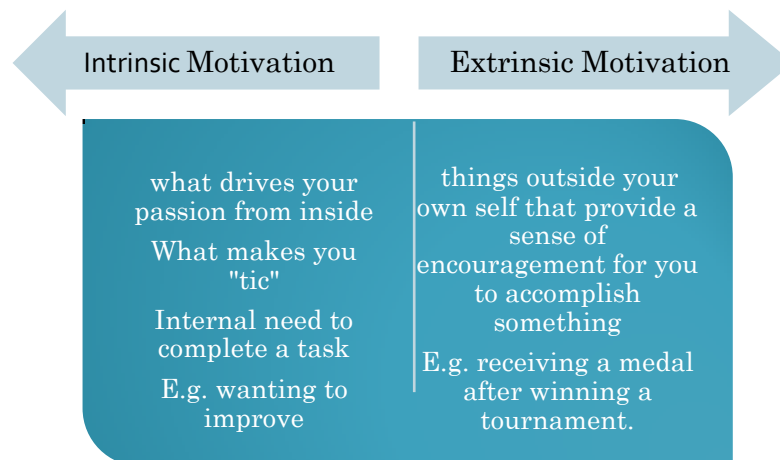
MOTIVATION

What is motivation?

What do you need to get out of bed in the morning to go to school? Or perhaps to study hard to get good grades? Or when you keep skating when you're tired because you need to score that goal to win the game? Motivation.

Motivation is the desire or willingness of an athlete to achieve a goal. Motivation provides athletes with a ***sense of direction***, and a ***sense of purpose*** for why they are doing what they are doing.

There are two types of motivation:



Extrinsic motivation can be very helpful, especially if you're looking to take your career to a higher level such as university (e.g. scholarships). That doesn't mean that extrinsic motivation only works for higher level players.

Feeling proud of yourself has more power and will keep motivating you later on. You will focus more on having fun and improving your abilities. The best competition is always against yourself, so by motivating yourself, you're trying to be better than you were before. You set your own limits and make sure they are high. But you need to make sure that those limits are within reach. Part of that comes with goal setting, which we will talk about next.

ACTIVITY

Make a list of things that motivate you.

For example, playing for your teammates. Seeing how hard they work may want you to work just as hard. Or maybe your parents as your source of encouragement and you want to have a good game for them.

- Once you have finished your list, identify one or two motivators, write them down in short form (less than 5 words). Something that when you read it, will remind you of the idea and help you get motivated.
- Now think of a place on you or your equipment that you can always see when you're on the ice (for example, put a piece of tape on your hockey stick, glove, wrist) and write these words with a sharpie on it before the game starts. That way, every time you look at it, it will remind you of why you're playing.



Goal Setting can be used in any circumstance, not exclusively in sport. It is likely that you have already set and achieved goals in your life, so why bother doing the extra effort?

Goal setting is the most frequently used psychological intervention in both group and individual consultations among American Olympic Athletes. It is a mental training technique that helps athletes understand where they are presently and where they want to be in the future. Goal setting can enhance your motivation and help you overcome setbacks in order to achieve optimal performance.

Specifically, Goal Setting will provide direction and focus attention in order to:

Encourage action
Continue to participate longer
Develop new learning strategies

TIPS FOR GOAL SETTING

Goal Setting

Focus on Performance and Process Goals rather than Outcome Goals

- Outcome Goals are based on winning or losing, but are not directly in a player's control; so it is possible to have the best performance (i.e. score most goals) yet still lose the game therefore viewing the game as a failure
- Performance is within the control of the athlete
- Process is the evaluation of the progress to reach performance goals

Ensure goals are worded in a positive manner rather than negative

- I.e. "Don't miss the net" will focus your attention to the consequences, thus thinking about it could cause it to happen
- Instead, re phrasing to "I will hit the net 9/10 shots this practice" sounds more positive and will center their attention to what a player wants to happen

Have both short and long term goals

- Short term goals can be achieved in the near future and can contribute to a broader long term goal which will require more time in order to accomplish

- For example, each week have a practice goal that could aid in achieving a game goal

Important to have individual and team goals

- Something to work on as a team for team building
- Creates a support system for players to assist in each other achieving goals

Understand your own personal definition of success

- Task/Mastery oriented athletes define success as satisfaction of performance reflecting best of their ability
 - Focus on development of competence and ability to improve
- Ego/competitive oriented athletes view success based on comparison with others
 - feel successful when demonstrate ability superior to another, regardless of improvement
- Olympic Athletes will usually score high on both task and ego orientation, but it is more important to focus on Task/Mastery when still developing skills

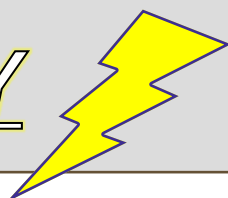
Following SMARTS and INSPIRED charts can be used to guide goal setting

SMARTS goals	
Specific	Be clear with goals, for example use “I want to win 80% of my face offs” instead of “I want to do my best”
Measurable	it is easier to receive feedback and for an athlete to learn to evaluate performance when specifying a measure (i.e. how could you measure “I want to do my best”? How could you measure “I save 15/20 shots on net this practice”?)
Action Oriented	Should be based on something the athlete has direct control over, like practicing to improve something
Realistic	Nothing too easy or too hard, but should be challenging in order to help growth
Timely	Give a timeline (ideally have both long and short term goals)
Self-Determined	Athlete should choose goals for themselves, possible to collect input from coaches, friends and parents but they are committing to these goals

<i>INSPIRED goals</i>	
<i>Internalized</i>	Self-created goals will increase intrinsic motivation to achieve
<i>Nurturing</i>	Should be focused on aiding your growth
<i>Specific</i>	Be clear with exact details to improve

<i>Planned</i>	Checkpoints to evaluate progress can be determined
<i>In your control</i>	Goals should be based off something
<i>Reviewed regularly</i>	Regularly evaluating will aid in your motivation to achieve
<i>Energizing</i>	Goals should make you feel inspired and excited to improve
<i>Documented</i>	If written down and clearly visible, there is a higher motivation to achieve

ACTIVITY

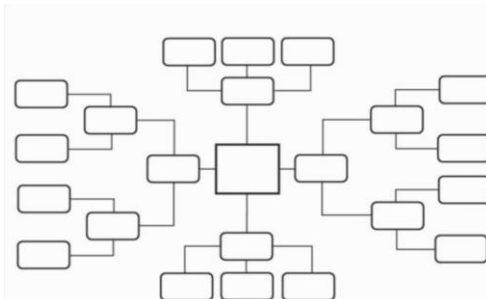


Practice for Goal Setting: Team or Individual

Examples of Improvement for Individual	Examples of Improvement Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - face offs - shots on net - goals or assists - decrease in penalties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - goals during penalty kill - passes before shot on net - quicker turnover when leaving ice - number of rushes - time spent in offensive side - time for defense to intercept

1. Identify performance measure (i.e. increase shots on net)
2. Obtain baseline values
3. Have each athlete/ line/ group identify guidelines that are important for success
4. Have team collaborate to identify guidelines
5. Measure target performance over the practice and game setting (usually 1 week)
6. Repeat 3 and 4 to evaluate progress and further increase difficulty

Concept Map Goal Setting Prior/Post to Games



After evaluating process during practices, take 5-10 minutes of the last practice (or another opportunity prior to game) to identify a common goal for the team. Write the goal down using either blackboard, whiteboard or paper.

Have groups of defense, goalies, forwards and coaching staff write how they plan to assist in achieving the goal. Then draw a line attaching the common goal to the new ideas. Next, have each individual member write personal goal and attach to the group's goal.

Attention and Concentration

Attention or concentration means focusing one's full attention on a task. Concentration is actively trying to keep distractions at bay. It involves being fully immersed in the task or skill being performed, while passively ignoring internal (negative thoughts) or external (other players, coaches, etc.) distractions. This can be especially important during time-dependent tasks (i.e. overtime, shootout, last few minutes of a tie game)

Loss in concentration can cause negative thoughts such as fear and self-doubt. This can lead to a continuous loss of concentration, which ultimately creates a harmful cycle that can result in failure. Concentration can be improved through mental exercises, so that when a distraction occurs, a player can effectively regain their concentration towards the task they are performing.

There are four types of attention, and four corresponding steps, or shifts of attention, that you must go through in order to stay focused and alert with regards to the task at hand. The four types of attention are: **internal, external, broad, and narrow**.

With these four types of attention in mind, we can identify the four steps that will be implemented to keep you focused:

	External	Internal
Broad	<u>Assessing Shifts</u> focus to the general external environment that is often changing rapidly throughout a performance. For example, include watching the opposing team's goalie during their warm up to look for weaknesses (i.e. movement across the goal, butterfly position)	<u>Analyzing Shifts</u> focus to reviewing one's general thoughts and emotions throughout a performance. Necessary for keeping your emotions in check in order to avoid getting flustered.
Narrow	<u>Acting Shifts</u> focus toward outward execution of a given skill. For example, a goalie focusing on catching the puck in her glove	<u>Preparing Shifts</u> focus to readying oneself to execute a given skill (i.e., mental rehearsal). For example, thinking about the play before it begins

Putting it all together:

Using the slap shot from the point as an example, you have **assessed** the goalie's weak points, you have **analyzed** your emotions by keeping calm and focusing on the objective of scoring, you have **prepared** yourself for the shot by thinking exactly where you want to

DISTRACTIONS

External Distractions	Internal Distractions
environmental events or situations (crowd noise, gamesmanship by opponents, weather conditions, playing surface)	subjective and include athlete's own thoughts, feelings, body sensations (most common is thinking of past mistakes or thinking too far ahead)

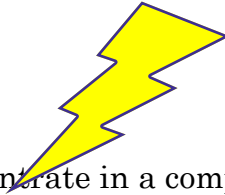
Important to recognize what distracts you the most and why is a trainable skill

- You can concentrate on only one thought at a time- make sure it is ***important and relevant*** to present task
- Your mind is focused when action and thought are the same/ ***absorbed in task*** (thoughts are specific, relevant and under own control)
- You lose concentration when you ***focus on factors outside your control***
- You should ***focus outward physical actions*** when you get nervous (outward actions over inward doubt) – “avoid paralysis by analysis”

TIPS FOR CONCENTRATION

- ***Setting performance goals:*** focusing on actions not results (focus on actions under your control and less likely to think of out of control things)
- ***Using routines-*** “pre performance routines” - specific thoughts that transform into actions to help stay in present moment (i.e. like handling the puck a certain way before a shootout)
- ***Using trigger words-*** short, vivid and positive verbal reminder to focus on target (can also be instructional cues like “push” , “pass back”)
- ***Imagining what to do next*** (mental imagery of practicing performance in your mind before it occurs, helps prepare for various situations) Physically relaxing and centering your body (i.e. lower shoulders, gentle neck roll, extending arms and slow breaths can lower center of gravity and reduce error)
- ***Avoid holding your breath*** when stressed (could combine and use word “relax”)

ACTIVITY



Improving ability to concentrate in a competitive situation:

Focus on controllable vs. non-controllable - make two lists. One list should be the controllable situations, which are those factors you can do something about, such as a response to a mistake or a bad play. The other list should be the uncontrollable situation, which are the elements of performance you cannot do anything about, such as the crowd's response to a mistake.

I.e. Controllable= your speed to get to the puck

I.e. Uncontrollable= how fast your opponent is skating to the puck

Simulation training

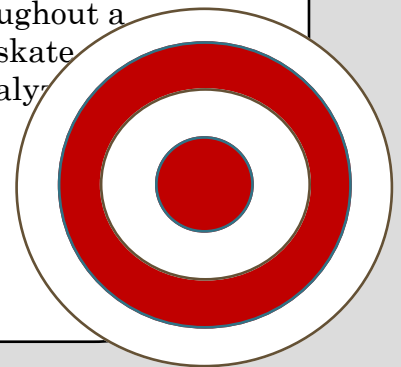
Place yourself in “real life” scenarios during practice in order to simulate possible distractions and additional areas of focus that could occur during a game. For example, practicing breakaways with skaters behind you can help you focus on moving forward instead of thinking about who is behind you.

Distraction drills

Identify distractors and deliberate attempts to shift your attention away from the areas of required focus in order to practice shifting back to relevant cues during a performance. For example, inviting parents to be noisy in the stands during practice.

Concentration cues

Develop a list of positive, focused cues (e.g. visual reminders, verbal cues) to quickly shift one's attention to appropriate points throughout a performance. For example, “Push” could be a cue to skate harder or “Look Up” when you receive a pass to analyze the surrounding for your team's position.



Thought Management

One of the most important skills for high level athletes is being able to control negative thoughts. Even thoughts we don't choose to have are able to set off a chain reaction that can seriously affect performance. Being able to ***recognize when they negatively affect your performance*** and having the tools to ***get your mind back into the game*** are beneficial skills for athletes of all levels, but especially for high level athletes.

Many people don't realize how powerful of a connection your mind has with your whole body. Think of a time when you were on the ice and made a mistake. Do you remember how you felt? Were you stressed, angry, did you lose focus? When you have recurring negative thoughts or become overly angry with yourself over a mistake, it can create unwanted stress in your body.

These series of reactions have the capability to overtake your common sense and lead you to have emotional breakdowns, take bad penalties, yell at your teammates, throw things or do other things that you would not normally do in a relaxed state. These kinds of behaviors will not only ***affect your personal performance*** but they can also be a ***distraction for the whole team***. One common error made by athletes is becoming even more upset with themselves when they are experiencing negative thoughts, which only makes matters worse. This is why it is important to understand when your thoughts may be heading in the wrong direction and how to correct and return to a strong and clear state of mind.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVELY MANAGING THOUGHTS

- ***Only worry about things in your control*** (worth ethic, personal decisions, positive attitude, etc.) do not let things you can't control get in your head (bad refs, skilled opponents, 'bad bounces')
- Don't beat yourself up when you don't reach your goals, just re-evaluate and modify them and ***make an alternate plan to achieve*** those goals
- Take a minute to close your eyes, block out all distractions, take deep breaths and ***relax*** when you feel that you may be getting inside your own head negatively. Remind yourself this is just a game that you enjoy, have fun when you play.

- ***Avoid snowball thinking***- where one error can trigger more irrelevant negative thoughts that will distract you from the game and affect your performance
- ***Remember you can't always win***. Accept losing a game, face off, etc. as a regular part of hockey and take it as a learning experience
- ***Accept disappointment in perspective***, will this issue matter in 3 days, 3 months or 3 years? (chances are it probably won't have a long term effect)
- ***Smile***: it really does help change your mood and relieve stress
- There is a 100% chance ***you do more positive things in a game than negative things***. Remember all the good you've done and don't beat yourself up about 1 little mistake (even though it may not seem little at the time)
- ***Try not to express anger/frustration visibly***. The other team may see this and know you are off your game and may try to keep getting in your head even more. Rather, come up with your own method (squeeze your stick as hard as you can 10 times) to release your emotions in a 'secret' way so nobody else knows you are having a tough time.
- ***Be consistent***: every time you are having a tough shift or a tough period, try to use the same methods to fix those mental errors so it will come naturally

EXERCISES TO CONTROL NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Take the pressure off:

Often, we go through these mental struggles because we are afraid of how people will react to our downfalls. Especially in a 'winning is everything culture' such as hockey, we think about what we NEED to do too much. Remember, at the end of the day, it is just hockey. This is a sport that you love and enjoy playing, even after a mistake or a bad game. Mistakes do not define you or say anything about who YOU are as a person, it's how you use this experience in order to improve. You have more to bring to the team than just your skills. Remember, attitude is contagious. If you're happy or upset, your teammates will notice and that will affect the team. Stay positive, have fun and take the pressure off.



Counting:

As simple as it may seem, slowly counting to a number of your choice (10, 20, 35, maybe your jersey number?) while sitting down and taking deep breaths is a tried and true method for athletes of all ages and skill levels.

Visualize each number in your mind and let that number be the only thing you can see and feel. Counting acts as a distraction and makes you forget about your negative thoughts, but this only works if you fully invest your mind into the counting.

In order for this to work you need to believe that it will work, you need to put in the effort and actually try to make it work. Once you reach your 'special' number you need to come out of the task with a whole new mindset that you are back to normal and ready to go.

The 3F's:

*****To be used after mistakes to prevent you from thinking negatively*****

'Fix it'

Think about what you did wrong and what can you do next time to reduce the chances of making the same mistake. This helps you rehearse the correct way and how it should be used in the future. If there's nothing you can do to fix it, chances are it's not within your control.

'Forget about it'

There's no point dwelling on mistakes, just learn from them and move on. This way you can avoid being negative about your performance and treat mistakes as they should be treated, as a part of the positive learning experience. (This is easier said than done, but with the proper mindset this is an easy task)

'Focus'

Get back on track, re-focus your thoughts to the task at hand. Put it behind you, but also get your mind back to the present.

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