

Designing Coach-Delivered Mental Skills Training Programs:

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Is This Really a Good Idea?

■ Yes!

◆ If you stay within your boundaries

☞ Education vs. clinical

■ Always keep this in mind:

◆ You are a coach and an educator

☞ You have a profound influence on your athletes psyche

- To deny this is just plain stupid

☞ You can “coach” mental skills and tools

- Key word is “skills” and “tools”

◆ You are not a shrink

☞ Curing psychological disorders is not part of your job description

☞ Distinguish what is “coachable” and what is not

Are You a Model of Mental Toughness?

- Rule number 1:
- Your athletes won't become what you want them to be – they will become what you are!
- Are you:
 - ◆ In control?
 - ◆ Disciplined?
 - ◆ Organized?
 - ◆ Confident in your own skill-set?
 - ◆ Able to cope with adversity effectively?
 - ◆ Able to focus on appropriate cues?
 - ◆ Resilient?

Tools vs. Skills Framework

■ Key Mental Tools

- ◆ Goal-setting
- ◆ Imagery
- ◆ Self-talk
- ◆ Relaxation / energization

■ Key Mental Skills

- ◆ Self-confidence
- ◆ Concentration
- ◆ Emotional control

Program Design Fundamentals

■ Education Phase

- ◆ A time to LEARN
- ◆ Introduce tools / skills
 - ☞ Do NOT expect performance enhancement

■ Acquisition Phase

- ◆ A time to PRACTICE
 - ☞ Practice just to practice
- ◆ Athlete gains familiarity with tools / skills
- ◆ Begin individualization process
 - ☞ You MAY see performance benefits

Program Design Fundamentals

■ Application Phase

- ◆ A time to KICK ASS!
- ◆ Tools and skills are well-learned / automated
- ◆ Nuance is displayed
- ◆ Emphasis on individualized programs
- ◆ Introduce concept of periodization
 - ☞ You SHOULD see performance benefits

Program Design Fundamentals

■ Teach in this order

◆ Goal-setting

- ☞ Best “legal” performance enhancer
- ☞ Process and performance emphasis
- ☞ SMART
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Attainable
 - Realistic
 - timely
- ☞ WRITE THEM DOWN!

Program Design Fundamentals

◆ Imagery

- ☞ Emphasize control and vividness
- ☞ Begin with familiar
- ☞ Introduce all of the senses
- ☞ Gradually add complexity

◆ Relaxation / energization

- ☞ PRT is EZ
- ☞ Energization
 - Breathing
 - Music

Program Design Fundamentals

■ Self-talk

- ◆ _____ thoughts per day
- ◆ _____ % are negative
- ◆ _____ % are the same as yesterday

■ ABC's

■ Cue words

Using the Tools to Enhance Skills

■ For Self-confidence

◆ Goals are the BEST tool

- ☞ Development of success history is critical
- ☞ Process / performance focus

◆ Imagery

- ☞ Athletes must “see success”
- ☞ Re-experience positive past performances
- ☞ Mental rehearsal of upcoming races reduces uncertainty and raises confidence

Using the Tools to Enhance Skills

■ For SC (continued)

◆ Relaxation techniques

- ☞ Can reduce both somatic / cognitive anxiety symptoms
 - Athlete feels more in control

◆ Self-talk

- ☞ Controlling the “conversation” is critical
- ☞ “I can” vs. “I can’t”
 - Performance implications

Using the Tools to Enhance Skills

■ For Concentration

◆ Goals

- ☞ Process, process, process, process.....
- ☞ Outcome focus, at best, is distracting

◆ Imagery

- ☞ Rehearsals enhance familiarity
- ☞ Familiarity is antecedent of automated performance

◆ Relaxation

- ☞ Somatic / cognitive anxiety are “distracting”
- ☞ Calm the mind / body for best concentration

Using the Tools to Enhance Skills

■ Concentration (continued)

◆ Self-talk

☞ Cue words

- “fast, smooth, strong”

◆ Routines

☞ Help athlete “prepare” to concentrate

Using the Tools to Enhance Skills

■ For Emotional Control

◆ Goals

- ☞ Process, process, process, process
- ☞ Outcome focus can produce wild emotional swings

◆ Imagery

- ☞ Imagery relaxation techniques
- ☞ Mental rehearsals of competition skiing with appropriate emotion

Using the Tools to Enhance Skills

■ Relaxation

- ◆ PRT is easy and effective

■ Self-talk

- ◆ Self-awareness of ST patterns often helpful for controlling emotion
- ◆ Reframing
 - ☞ “butterflies” in formation?

Workshop

- Small groups according to level you wish to initiate MST program
 - ◆ Recreational Club
 - ◆ HS
 - ◆ Elite Club
 - ◆ College
- Using ideas from this presentation and your group – sketch out plan for MST delivery this season
- Turn-in group product – Hammer will provide feedback

Example – College Team Educational Phase

- Week of 10/1
 - ◆ Educational session goals
 - ☞ Process, performance, outcome
 - ◆ Goal-setting “homework” assigned
 - ☞ Athlete ID’s process, performance, and outcome goals for each phase of season
- Week of 10/8
 - ◆ Educational session imagery
 - ☞ Emphasize vividness and control
 - ☞ Introductory imagery exercises
 - ☞ Go over GS “homework”
- Week of 10/15
 - ◆ Educational session relaxation
 - ☞ Introduce anxiety / performance relationship
 - ☞ PRT exercise
 - ☞ Assign new GS homework detailing goals for this week
- Week of 10/22
 - ◆ Educational session Self-Talk
 - ☞ Introduce ABC’s
- Week of 10/29
 - ◆ Educational session Self-Confidence
 - ◆ Introduce how to utilize “tools” to enhance SC
 - ◆ Assign new GS homework ID’ing goal achievement for past week