Basic Mental Skills
The Five NCCP Core Competencies

Valuing  Problem-solving  Interacting  Leading  Critical Thinking
Learning Outcomes

Help athletes be mentally prepared for competition

Integrate mental-preparation strategies into practices
Module Outline

- Recognizing gaps in mental skills;
- Improving attentional control;
- Improving emotional control;
- Setting goals;
- Planning for mental preparation.
What Is Mental Preparation?
Task 2.1.1:

Athletes who perform well in competition are able to...
Recognizing Gaps In Mental Skills

• Athletes need help mentally as well as physically to return successfully to play after an injury.

RM, p. 43 - 45
Types Of Mental Skills

Managing focus:
• Type of attentional control

Managing negative anxiety:
• Type of emotional control

Goal setting:
Signs of Trouble
### Spotting Focus and Anxiety Problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of Focus Problems</th>
<th>Signs of Anxiety Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is easily distracted by noise, other competitors</td>
<td>Fidgets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes wander</td>
<td>Bites nails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrates on the wrong thing</td>
<td>Is jumpy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misses cues from the environment (e.g. gets hit by a flying ball he or she should have seen coming)</td>
<td>Is hypersensitive to noise and sights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talks more than normal</td>
<td>Talks less than normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yawns a lot</td>
<td>Yawns a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels nauseous (butterflies)</td>
<td>Feels nauseous (butterflies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is short of breath</td>
<td>Is short of breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdraws from others</td>
<td>Withdraws from others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sticks to others</td>
<td>Has cold, clammy hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has needs to urinate a lot</td>
<td>Needs to urinate a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweats a lot</td>
<td>Sweats a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks negatively about himself/herself</td>
<td>Talks negatively about himself/herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has tight muscles</td>
<td>Has tight muscles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a headache</td>
<td>Has a headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels as if he or she is going to vomit</td>
<td>Feels as if he or she is going to vomit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a dry (cotton) mouth</td>
<td>Has a dry (cotton) mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty sleeping</td>
<td>Has difficulty sleeping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attentional Control

• Ability to actively direct one’s attention to relevant cues in the environment;
• To maintain that attention for the necessary period of time;
• To be fully aware of the situation;
• Concentration, focus and refocus.
Emotional Control

- Emotions are an important component of human functioning;
- Can be functional or dysfunctional;
- Intensifying emotions require a stimulus or trigger.
Task 3.1.2:

Picture yourself as Jan’s coach. What would you do to help her, and how would you do it?
Distractions and Your Sport

• Focus shifts

• Objects of focus

• Examples of distracters

CW, p. 7 - 8
## Focus Shifts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Few Shifts</th>
<th>Few Shifts</th>
<th>Lots of Shifts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Individual sports practiced/played in a closed environment.</td>
<td>• Individual sports practised/played in an open environment.</td>
<td>• Team sports played in either an open, or a closed environment, in which more than 2 athletes are key performers at any one time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Team sports in which one athlete performs at a time.</td>
<td>• Team sports in which there are only 2 or 3 key performers at a time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Objects of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Narrow</th>
<th>Broad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Perceived internally by the athlete; usually sensations of the body/body parts or thoughts. | Examples:  
- Orientation of body in space  
- Arm/leg position  
- Posture  
- Thoughts, feelings, self-talk  
- Visualizing individual performance | Examples:  
- Visualizing teammates’ movements  
- Visualizing opponent’s patterns of play |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External</th>
<th>Narrow</th>
<th>Broad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Can be seen, heard, or touched by the athlete. | Examples:  
- Target  
- Piece of equipment  
- Start signal  
- Turning wall  
- Opponent  
- Playing surface/terrain/water  
- Trajectory of ball  
- Time clock  
- Landing spot | Examples:  
- Movement of teammates  
- Fans in the stands  
- Reading opponents’ patterns of play |
Distracters

- Spectators
- Coach
- Teammates
- Competitors
- Officials
- Noise
- Equipment
Process For Improving Focus

Normalization

Self-awareness

Skill development

Simulation (in practice situations)

Implementation (in competition)
Ways of Improving Focus

Let’s Practise

RM, p. 15 - 19
Action Card

I will START…

I will STOP…

I will CONTINUE…
Improving Emotional Control

Task 4.1.2:

Picture yourself as Jake’s or Jasmine’s coach.

What would you do to help him/her, and how would you do it?
Types of Anxiety

**Somatic:** physiological response (heart rate).

**Cognitive:** mental - excitement or worry.

**Trait:** character trait that responds to a threatening situation, person or event.

**State:** feeling of apprehension or excitement in the here and now.
Definition of Stress

“Stress is a substantial imbalance between demand (physical and/or psychological) and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet that demand has important consequences.” (McGrath, 1920, p. 20)
Four Stages of Stress

Stage 1: Environmental demand (physical and psychological)

Stage 2: Individual’s perception of the environmental demand

Stage 3: Stress response (physical and psychological)
- Arousal
- State anxiety (physical and mental)
- Muscle tension
- Attentional changes

Stage 4: Behavioural consequences (performance or outcome)
Ideal Emotional State

Is the condition in which the athlete experiences appropriate feelings and maintains them at optimum levels of intensity and functioning in a way that enhances performance.
The Relationship Between Arousal and Performance

Arousal level at which performance is maximized
Causes of Anxiety

What are some causes of anxiety?

RM, p. 24
Process For Managing Anxiety

1. Normalization
2. Self-awareness
3. Skill development
4. Simulation (in practice situations)
5. Implementation (in competition)
Methods for Managing Anxiety

Let’s Practise

RM, p. 29
Emotional Control

MANAGING NEGATIVE ANXIETY

- Breathing Control
- Visualization of Sports Skills
- Positive Self-talk
- Relaxation Response
Setting Goals
## Reasons Athletes are Involved in Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A desire for achievement</td>
<td>A wish to improve, master new skills, and pursue excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A need for affiliation</td>
<td>A desire to have positive and friendly relations with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire for sensation</td>
<td>A desire to experience the sights, sounds, and physical feelings surrounding a sport or the excitement in a sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire for self-direction</td>
<td>A wish to feel a sense of control, to feel in charge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal Setting

Task 5.1.1:

What goal setting do you currently do with the athletes you coach? When and how do you do it?
Types of Goals

Outcome goals

• Competition results
• Self-improvement goals

Process goals
Types of Goals

Long-term goals:
• Goals that are to be realized by the end of a season.

Short-term goals:
• Small steps taken right away to reach the desired long-term goal.
The Relationship Between Different Types of Goals

- Process Goals
- Competition Results
- Self-improvement
## Task 5.1.3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step of the Goal-setting Process</th>
<th>Detailing the Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong> - Establish the goal and commit to it (i.e. what needs to be accomplished, and why is this important?).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. (Ski racer) - Improve race start, because you can win or lose a race in the first 25 m as a result of the quality of start.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong> - State the goal clearly in terms of performance or outcome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Cut 1 second of time from tripping wand to 10 m by January 1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong> - Identify indicators of success (i.e. what evidence is needed to say the goal has been achieved?).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Time starts on first day of training in October. Timed starts in training for Nov - 0.5 seconds less; timed starts in Dec - 0.75 seconds less; start time Jan 1 - one second less than in October.</td>
<td>CW, p. 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4</strong> - Identify specific strategies to achieve the goal (i.e. what must be done to achieve this goal, and how will this be done?).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. Build a permanent practice start ramp; video starts, detect and correct technique; build upper-body strength.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Action Card

I will START…

I will STOP…

I will CONTINUE…
## Planning For Mental Preparation

**Task 6.1.1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Skill</th>
<th>Time of the Season</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Negative Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planning For Mental Preparation

Read the reference material and add to your answer.

RM, p. 47 - 48
# Planning for Mental Preparation in a Practice

## Practice Planning Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEAM:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>TIME: from</th>
<th>to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION:</td>
<td>GOALS:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUIPMENT NEEDED:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Introduction**
  - Key messages/safety points

- **Warm-up**
  - Include general and specific warm-up
  - Equipment needed

- **Main part**
  - Pay attention to the order of the activities
  - Equipment needed

- **Conclusion**
  - Key messages/safety points
Final Words

• Mental preparation is an important component of athlete preparation.
• With planning and creativity, you can make it part of regular practices.
• Building athlete awareness of their own ideal performance state is a key role of the coach.
• Helping athletes to develop the skills they need to manage themselves independently is one of the key roles of the coach.
• Athletes need to practice to improve basic mental skills.
BASIC MENTAL SKILLS

Action Card

I will START…

I will STOP...

I will CONTINUE…