



NCCP Basic Mental Skills

Coach Workbook



Coaching Association of Canada
Association canadienne des entraîneurs



National
Coaching
Certification
Program

PARTNERS IN COACH EDUCATION

The National Coaching Certification Program is a collaborative program of the Government of Canada, provincial/territorial governments, national/provincial/territorial sport organizations, and the Coaching Association of Canada.



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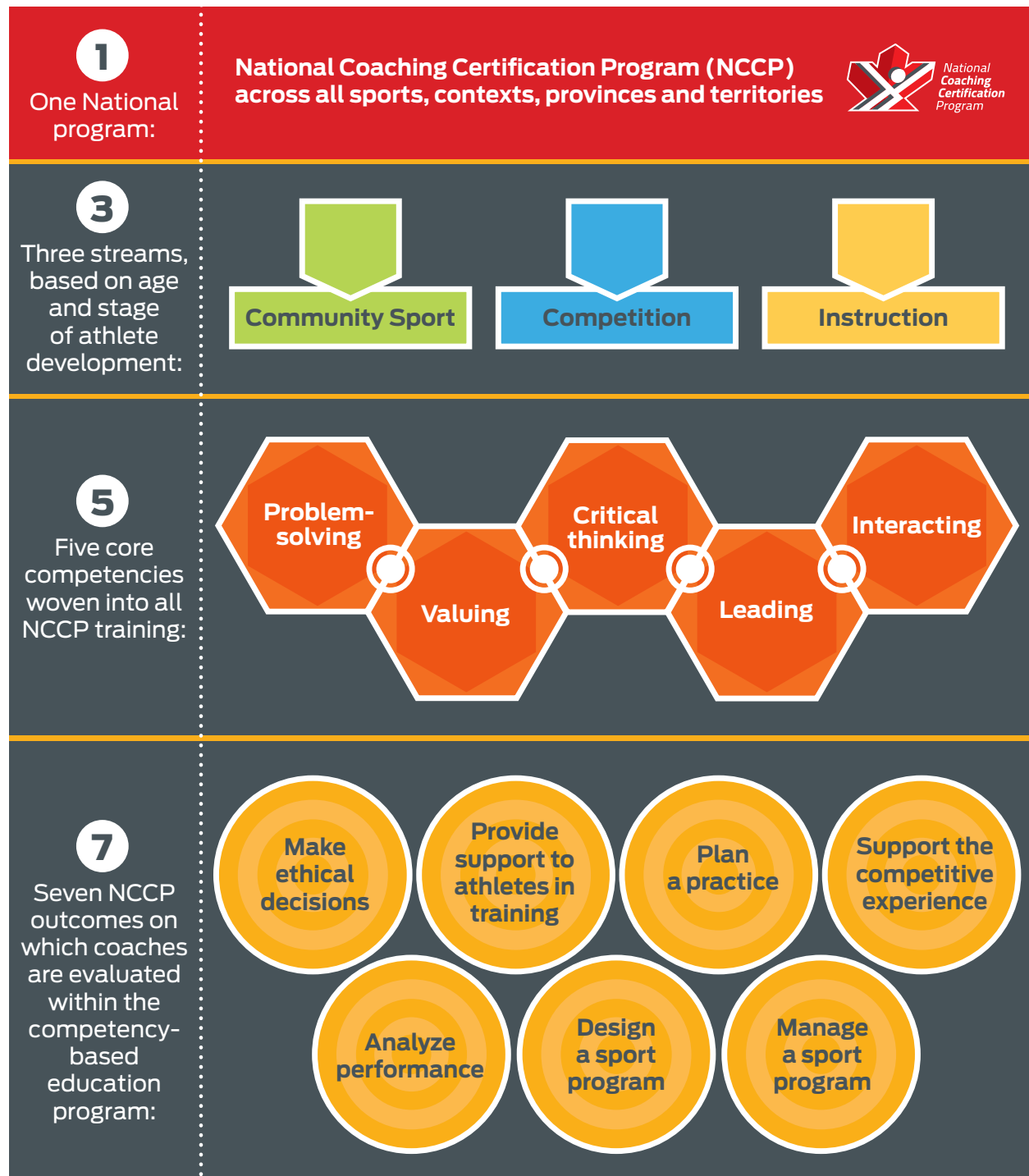
1 National Coaching Certification Program

Welcome to the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Basic Mental Skills. This module's goal is to support coaches in developing mental skills in their day-to-day practice as a coach.

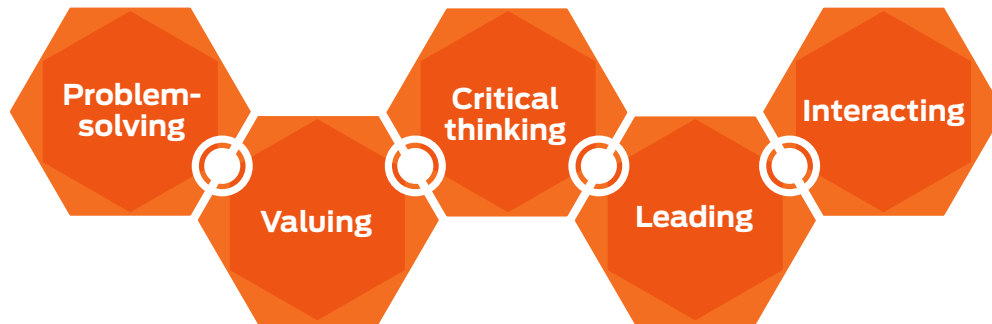
This module is part of the NCCP, a national training and certification program offered in over 65 sports in Canada. More than 2 million coaches and sport leaders have taken part in training, education and certification activities offered by the NCCP, since its inception in 1974. The NCCP is a collaborative program of the Government of Canada, provincial/territorial governments, national/provincial/territorial sport organizations, and the Coaching Association of Canada.

Coaches will receive NCCP credit. They can track their progress in The Locker, the NCCP database that supports the efforts of all coaches involved in coach education in Canada.

1.1 The NCCP 1–3–5–7 definition



1.2 NCCP core competencies



As you progress through this module, you'll work on developing 5 core competencies. Those competencies will help you become more effective and have a more meaningful impact on participants' experiences. The competencies are problem-solving, valuing, critical thinking, leading and interacting.

At several points in the module, you'll participate in activities that involve reflecting on and assessing your learning based on these 5 competencies. These are important activities, because you indicate in them how you'll apply and model the 5 core competencies in your participants' training.

Here are just some of the ways these competencies come into play in the Basic Mental Skills module:

Problem-solving

- Develop ways of dealing with situations where anxiety, distractions and poor focus may affect performance.

Valuing

- Respect individual differences and intervene with participants in a respectful and inclusive manner.

Critical thinking

- Recognize behaviours, before and during competition, that suggest participants may need to improve their mental skills.
- Compare current knowledge, skill and attitudes with the information provided in this module.
- Reflect on how to talk with participants to determine what is affecting their performance.

Leading

- Help participants become more autonomous about reflecting on and preparing for performance.
- Educate participants about the importance of developing and implementing strategies for performance.

Interacting

- Brainstorm with other coaches to develop strategies and plans for improving performance.

1.3 Learning outcomes

The NCCP distinguishes between training and certification. To become certified in this and other coaching contexts, you must be evaluated, and you must provide evidence in the evaluation that you meet certain criteria.

The learning outcomes listed below reflect the evidence and criteria that apply to this module. The learning activities in this module will prepare you to:



1.4 Purpose of the document

This Coach Workbook is your record of what you learned in the NCCP Basic Mental Skills module. We recommend that you save your workbook and consult it regularly to ensure continuous improvement of your coaching skills.

1.5 Workshop topics

There are 4 topics in this Coach Workbook:

- Basic mental skills
- Developing and maintaining focus
- Setting goals
- Planning for mental skill development

1.6 Overall context

This module is one of many offered in the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). For more information on the NCCP and the modules it offers, visit the Coaching Association of Canada's website at www.coach.ca.

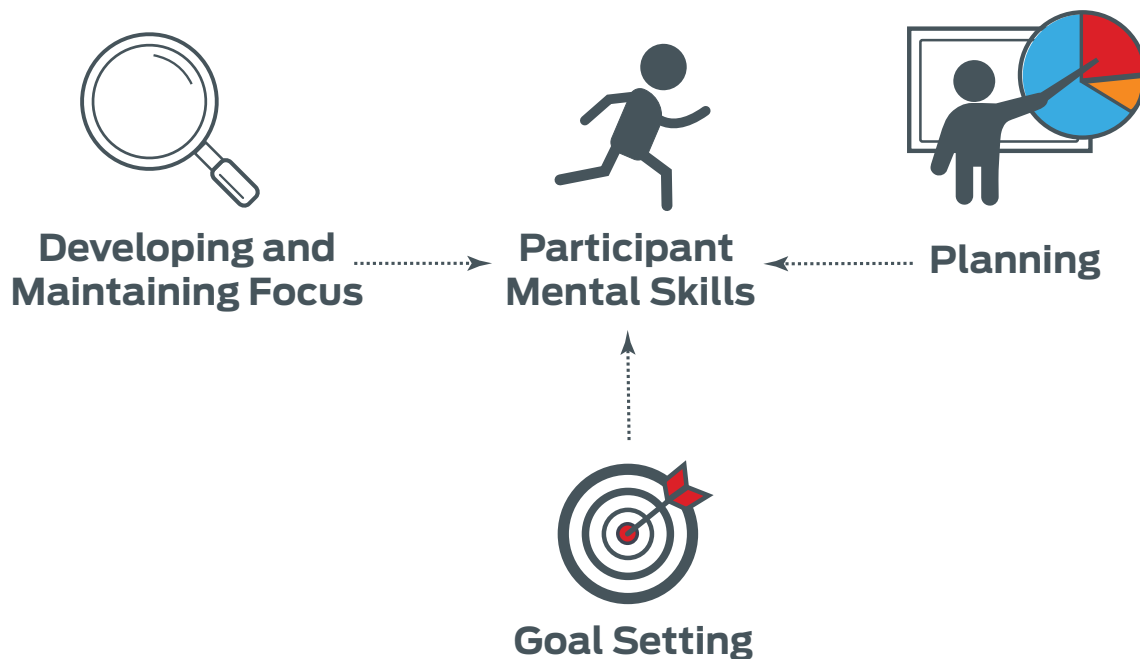
2 Basic mental skills

Objective: You'll be able to identify basic mental skills and their roles in supporting participants.

2.1 The basics

Basic mental skills (or psychological skills) have 3 key elements:

- Developing and maintaining focus
- Setting goals
- Planning



Mental skills (focus, setting goals, planning) can be used to improve athletic performance and mental health. As coaches, you have a duty of care to promote and protect the well-being of participants in sport.

Mental health is a state of psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Through mental health, individuals are capable of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that allow them to:

- enjoy life
- realize their potential
- cope with the normal stresses of life
- work productively
- contribute to their community

(World Health Organization, 2022)

Developing and practising the mental skills mentioned above will support the development of the whole individual, their mental health, and their life outside of sport.

Some signs of good mental health are positive thoughts, feelings and behaviours. For example, having a purpose and satisfaction in life, having good relations with others and experiencing independence. Other examples can include seeking personal growth, accepting oneself despite imperfections and feeling integrated into our communities.

2.1.1 Developing and maintaining focus

- Focus is what you're thinking about (attentional dimension) and feeling now, in the moment (emotional dimension).
- Participants who are in the now think about and feel their muscles when they warm up. They centre themselves on their position for the current play. They aren't thinking about what to have for supper or when to study for a test!

Recall a time when you or a participant you coached demonstrated focus. Below, provide examples of times when you demonstrated focus or when you saw a participant you coached demonstrate focus.

2.1.2 Setting goals

- Goals are statements of what a participant or team wants to accomplish. Goals provide both a sense of purpose and direction to training and competition.
- Developing goals provides something on which a participant can direct focus.

2.1.3 Planning for mental skill development

- Planning is the connection between setting goals and implementing the development of focus.
- Planning as a mental skill incorporates 2 aspects. First, examining the elements of mental skill development, and then determining dedicated portions of your time with a participant to develop their mental skills.

The Canadian Sport Psychology Association (CSPA)

cspa-acps.com

As a coach, you may encounter instances where you realize a participant needs additional support. The Canadian Sport Psychology Association (CSPA) is an organization devoted to applied sport psychology. Applied sport psychology involves facilitating the development of mental and emotional skills, techniques, attitudes, perspectives and processes that lead to performance enhancement and positive personal development.

CSPA Professional Members are consultants who work with athletes and coaches to assist them in achieving many of the following objectives:

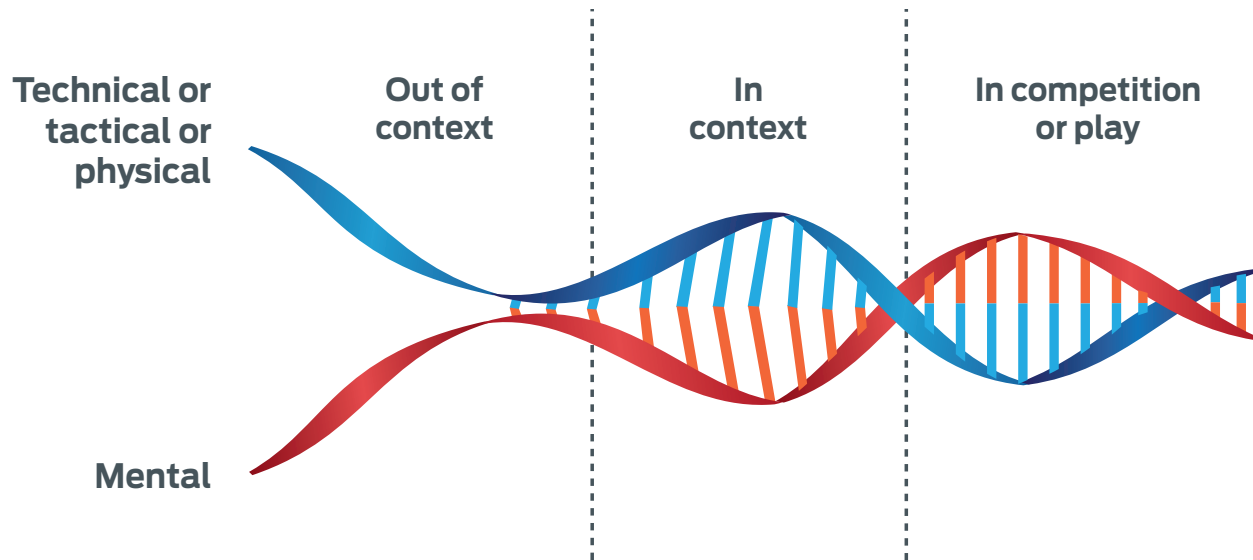
- Reach their performance potential in sport or other aspects of life
- Regulate arousal, stress and emotions
- Improve confidence, motivation and concentration
- Manage time effectively
- Mentally plan for training and competitions
- Create and maintain positive environments
- Improve communication skills
- Learn specific performance enhancement techniques (example: imagery, setting goals)
- Improve recovery and regeneration
- Debrief and evaluate performance or programs
- Improve decision-making processes
- Rehabilitate from an injury
- Make a positive transition from sport

My notes

2.2 Model for integrating mental skills

For the purpose of this model, consider the simple progression of learning a technical, tactical or physical skill as the following:

- Introduce and practise the skill **out of context** (isolated from other skills) of the competition or game (example: in a drill).
- Practise the skill **in the context** of the competition or play (example: a scrimmage).
- Implement the skill **in a competition or play** (example: at competition).



Mental skills that are integrated into the training process work best in improving participants' performance and life skills. The same is true for technical, tactical or physical skills.

Example to describe the model for integrating mental skills

Progression	Technical skill: kicking in soccer	Mental skill: breathing techniques
1. Out of context	Introduce kicking the ball from the inside of the participant's foot.	Introduce breathing techniques and dedicate time to practise them.
2. In context	Conduct drills to improve dribbling by using the inside of the participant's foot to kick the ball.	Prior to conducting a technical skill drill, take 1 to 2 minutes to practise breathing techniques for focus.
3. In competition or play	Reinforce the skill by encouraging it in play.	2 to 3 hours prior to competition or play, reinforce breathing techniques for support during competition.

2.3 Introduction to mental health

Mental health is a state of psychological, emotional and social well-being, in which individuals are capable of feeling, thinking and acting in ways that allow them to enjoy life, realize their potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. Mental health differs from mental performance and mental illness.

Mental performance is the ability to mentally process and use mental or self-regulation skills to perform in a changing environment. It can affect a person's state of mental health, that is a low capability may lead to poor state of mental health (Dithurbide et al., 2022). For example, if a person can't set goals, plan and focus effectively, they may find it hard to maintain purpose and clear direction in life and sport.

Some signs of good mental performance include the ability to:

- focus on the task at hand and manage distractions
- remain confident and motivated through good and challenging times
- maintain a positive attitude and engage in positive self-talk even when facing setbacks
- regulate emotions and arousal to match the demands of tasks or situations
- perceive stressors as challenges to learn and grow rather than as threats to fail
- recall relevant information from memory to perform tasks
- make sound decisions

Someone's mental performance may suffer if they're experiencing poor mental health (either from internal causes such as low self-care or external sources such as being in an unsafe environment). When this happens, it can lead to poor athletic performance.

Mental illness is a condition in which significant and persistent changes in feeling, thinking and behaving lead to impaired functioning and significant distress in one's life (Canadian Mental Health Association, n.d.). People with mental illness can maintain good mental health and mental performance with adequate self-care and support. Furthermore, those who don't experience symptoms of mental illness can still experience poor mental health or mental performance. That's why mental health and mental performance maintenance is important for everyone, including coaches and participants!

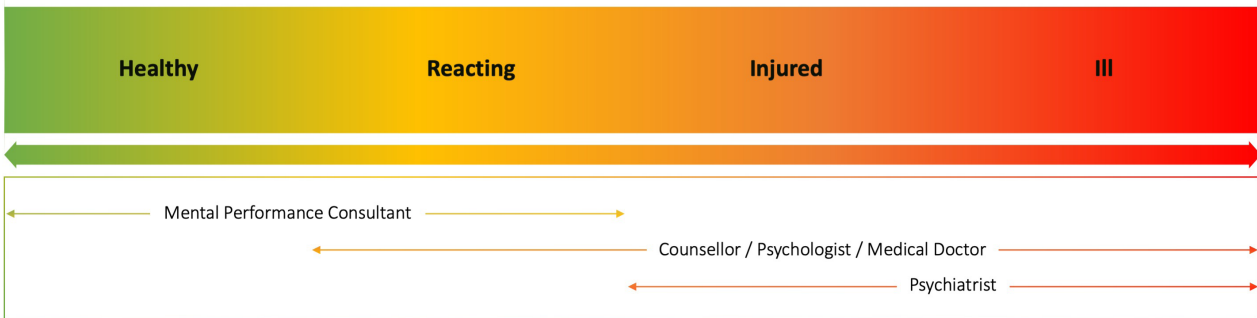
2.3.1 Continuum of Mental Performance and Mental Health Practitioners

Keep in mind that being a coach doesn't make you a mental health expert. A coach's role is to check in with participants and determine if they need additional support. A helpful tool to determine what kind of support participants may need is the Continuum of Mental Performance and Mental Health Practitioners.

Continuum of Mental Performance and Mental Health Practitioners

MENTAL HEALTH INDICATORS

<p>Normal mood, good sense of humour Normal sleep patterns High energy and physical health High concentration and alertness Consistent performance High engagement Normal social activity</p>	<p>Occasional anxiety, irritability or sadness Sleep difficulties Low energy, tension or headaches Reduced concentration, intrusive thoughts Inconsistent or reduced performance Decreased engagement, procrastination Reduced social activity</p>	<p>Persistent anxiety, anger or sadness Sleep disturbances, nightmares Persistent fatigue, aches or pains Poor concentration, indecision Poor performance Presenteeism Social avoidance</p>	<p>Excessive anxiety, anger or depressed mood Significant sleep disturbances or oversleeping Exhaustion, physical illness No concentration, dark or suicidal thoughts Inability to perform or complete normal tasks Absenteeism Isolation, withdrawal from loved ones</p>
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MENTAL PERFORMANCE AND MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

Note. Mental Performance Consultants (MPCs) can collaboratively work with mental health practitioners to support performance and mental health during the Injured and Ill phases but cannot diagnose or treat mental illnesses if they are not dually trained as **psychologists** or counsellors. MPCs and Medical Doctors (MDs) are key first points of contact and referral sources when mental health challenges arise.

(Durand-Bush & Van Slingerland, 2021)

The continuum shows mental health indicators and where a participant might be on the spectrum of healthy, reacting, injured or ill. It also provides a range for the type of practitioner who could support participants (see descriptions in Appendix A).

2.3.2 Accessing care

Scenario	Text
Scenario 1	You coach a participant who is very passionate about their sport. They've told you multiple times how happy they are when they're participating. You gave them some feedback during practice and they reacted in a way that was very out of character for them. You noticed their eyes starting to tear up. They shut down for the rest of the practice. You check in with the participant and learn that they're feeling tired. They have finals coming up next week and are worried about their exams.
Scenario 2	You coach a participant who has real athletic ability and is incredibly focused. However, lately, you notice the participant is getting distracted easily, having regular outbursts, and isn't performing as well as usual. This happened at yesterday's competition and you can tell the participant feels disappointed and discouraged with themselves.

Scenario	Text
Scenario 3	You coach a local team and have worked hard to create an environment that encourages friendship and support. For the last month, a participant has been in and out, showing up to only 1 practice a week, if any. While they're at practice, they're distant from their teammates, their interactions are much more volatile than usual, and they're often quickly fatigued. In the middle of a practice, the participant returns to the bench and says they wish to leave as they don't want to be part of the team anymore. They tell you: "I'm just not good enough to keep going and I can't take it."

Based on your assigned scenario, what type of support might the person in the scenario need? Use the continuum to guide your discussion.

As a coach, your role is to watch for changes in participants' thoughts, feelings and behaviours. And then, to assist participants in accessing the right support, and reinforce the skills they already have.

My notes

3 Developing and maintaining focus

Objective: You'll be able to teach participants to use mental skill techniques to improve their focus.

3.1 Types of focus

Focus is what you're **thinking** about (attentional dimension) and **feeling** (emotional dimension) now, in the moment.

Your role as a coach is to support participants in developing and maintaining focus.

3.1.1 Recognizing mental gaps: Participants who perform well in competition are able to do what in relation to mental skills?

My notes

3.2 Signs of lack of focus

3.2.1 What are possible signs or behaviours that might indicate that a participant is having trouble focusing?

- To help you with this question, you may wish to think of someone who struggled in the past when you were coaching that person.
- Use the space below to record the discussion in plenary.

Sign	Example

3.2.2 Signs of lack of focus

- Easily distracted by noise or other competitors
- Hypersensitive to noise
- Eyes wander frequently
- Concentrates on the wrong thing
- Misses cues from the environment (example: struck by a flying ball they should have seen coming)
- Fidgets or is jumpy
- Bites nails
- Talks more or less than usual
- Yawns frequently
- Feels nauseous
- Butterflies (that is, nervousness that one can feel in their core)
- Is short of breath
- Withdraws or sticks to others
- Expresses negative self-talk
- Has difficulty sleeping

Note that some of the signs above arise from anxiety, which in turn causes a lack of focus. As well, the signs listed above may indicate a lack of focus, but they aren't definitive and are very individual. That is, signs may indicate 1 thing for 1 participant and something different for another participant. For example, yawning frequently may be due to simple fatigue.

My notes

3.3 Improving attentional control

3.3.1 Case study

Nima has been chosen for the travel team that you coach. Sometimes Nima nearly misses the beginning of the competition, being seemingly off in another world. Nima constantly moves from 1 teammate to another and is unable to keep attention on the tasks at hand. Nima seems preoccupied by what everyone else is doing, and often forgets equipment and instructions. Nima's judgment seems poor and is often unable to find environmental cues. Therefore, Nima can't anticipate anything and is constantly reacting too late. Nima seems to get worse as the competition progresses, getting more and more distracted until Nima can barely execute even the most basic skills.

Picture yourself as Nima's coach. What could be done to help improve Nima's attentional control? How could you, as a coach, take on these actions?

3.3.2 Attentional dimensions matrix

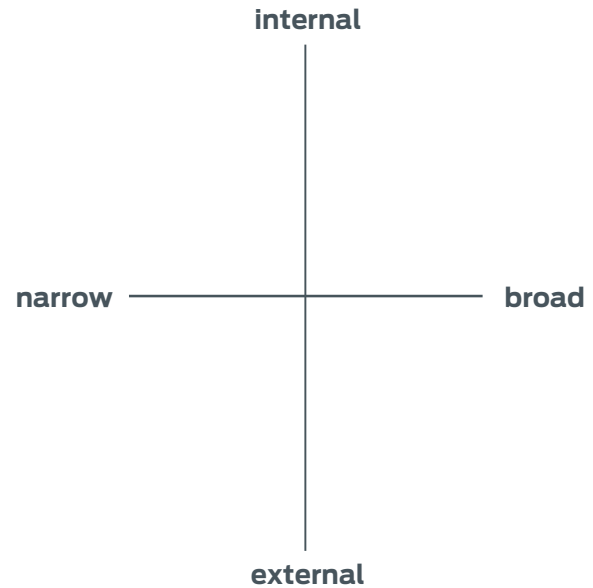
The attentional dimensions matrix is a way of thinking about participants' focus and how to make intentional shifts from 1 type of focus to another. The attentional dimensions matrix is adapted from Nideffer (1976, 1981), who indicated that the attentional dimension exists along 2 dimensions: width and direction.

Width: broad or narrow

- Broad refers to focus that is directed to perceiving and interpreting many cues at the same time.
- Narrow refers to focus that is directed to perceiving and interpreting only 1 or 2 cues at the same time.

Direction: internal or external

- Internal refers to focus that is directed inward, toward perceiving and interpreting cues that the participant feels or thinks.
- External refers to focus that is directed outward, toward perceiving and interpreting cues in the surrounding environment that the participant can usually see or hear.

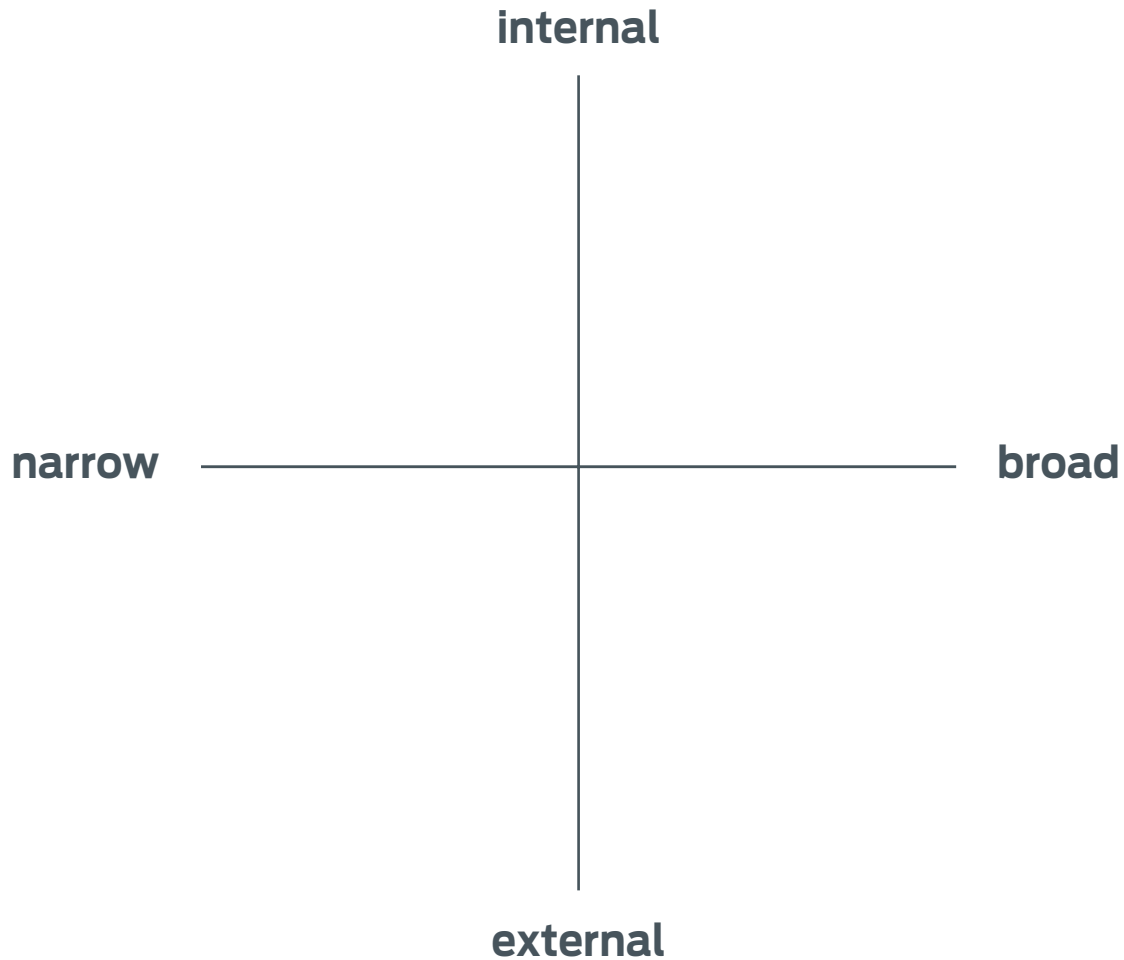


Different types of focus are used for different purposes. One type isn't better than another.

Type of focus	Purpose	Example
Broad-external (lower-right quadrant)	Rapidly assessing a situation	Football quarterback reading the offence and defence before making a pass
Narrow-external (lower-left quadrant)	Concentrating exclusively on 1 or 2 external cues	Focusing on a golf ball before swinging the club
Broad-internal (upper-right quadrant)	Analyzing and planning	Developing a game plan or strategy
Narrow-internal (upper-left quadrant)	Mentally rehearsing an upcoming performance or control an emotional state	Mentally rehearsing a discus throw and taking a deep breath

3.3.3 Attentional dimensions matrix activity

If you're with coaches who are in the same sport as yours, complete the attentional dimensions matrix with specific examples from your sport in a competition setting. If you're with coaches from different sports, select a sport together and complete the matrix.



Notes:

- Concentration refers to learning to direct attention for a period of time on a particular object or cue.
- Shuttling refers to learning to shift between the quadrants of the attentional dimension matrix.

3.3.4 Distractions

Distractions are unwanted shifts in focus.

Take a moment to brainstorm about distractions that are specific to what participants may encounter in your sport.

3.3.5 Managing distractions and focusing on relevant cues: Imagery

Our minds are always full of images, thoughts and feelings. To perform well, participants need to be in control of these images. And, the participants need to “see” and “feel” themselves performing well. Imagery is a skill that allows participants to create a blueprint of how they want to be and what they want to focus on.

Imagery is an opportunity to create a positive reality. It also allows participants to be well prepared for competition. Imagery is closely linked to focus, because we often want participants to visualize their focus plan. That is, what they want to be thinking and feeling while competing. It’s a skill that can give participants the confidence to return to play after an injury or concussion.

Imagery techniques are found in section A.4 of [Appendix A](#), in this Coach Workbook.

Note: the words imagery and visualization are often used interchangeably. However, there are subtle differences between them.

- Visualization generally involves seeing the actual skilled performance or routine.
- Imagery is more creative and often combines visuals with the other senses (example: hearing, smelling, feeling movement).

General tips for using imagery with your participants

- Participants need to practise imagery regularly to get better at it, just like any other skill.
- The only rule about imagery is that it must be positive. There's no point visualizing a poor performance, a mistake, bad technique, an injury, ...
- Work with your participants to find out what works best for them. Some participants can see themselves executing a skill or remembering a past, good performance. For others, it's more of a feeling.
- Participants don't always need to lie down when they visualize. It's often useful for participants to approximate the position they'll compete in. For instance, in canoe/kayak or rowing, participants could sit and create small movements as they imagine their race.
- Participants can imagine skills from an internal perspective (doing it) or from an external perspective (as if watching the skills on video). Both perspectives are OK.
- Participants can imagine just about anything. For example, specific technical aspects of a skill, tactical plans, race focus plans, past best performances, future competitions, feelings of confidence,
- It can be hard to know how well a participant is using imagery. Often it helps to sit with participants while they use the technique and then ask them if it is having an impact.

3.4 Improving emotional control

3.4.1 Picture yourself as the participant's coach in the following scenarios. What are the different ways you could help the participant? Of those options, what approach would you take to help? Use the boxes below to list your ideas for each scenario.

Scenario A

Kai is a participant who is a pleasure to coach. Kai is attentive during practices, works hard and is a team-oriented person. He often helps others who are less skilled than he is. Kai makes sure everyone has a chance to shine in practices. He comes from a loving family and works hard in all aspects of his life. Kai drives himself very hard and wants to be the best possible. His friends describe him as sincere, caring, fun loving and an all-round cool friend. In practice, Kai proves he can excel in the sport. In competition, however, it's as if a different person shows up. He doesn't want to eat on competition day. He fidgets and yawns constantly as if he is bored, yet his eyes are wide open, and he almost looks frightened. He's so worried he'll let down his teammates, coach and parents that competing doesn't seem fun to him. As a result, his performances are usually well below what he's capable of, and the person he ends up disappointing most is himself.

Scenario B

Jasmine is your star athlete. She is first to practice and last to leave. When you need something done, Jasmine is the one who will always pull through for you. She even performs well under pressure. Last month, Jasmine hit her head in a competition and has not played in a competition since. She followed the doctor-recommended, 6-step, return-to-play protocol. She has been practising a bit, but you can't get the same intensity out of her that she used to have. She is very tentative. Jasmine has been cleared by a doctor to resume all levels of play, including competition. Jasmine says she is fine and is playing to the best of her ability. Yet, you notice that her spark is gone and she just isn't performing the way she used to.

3.4.2 Emotions and anxiety

Emotions or feelings are important components of total human functioning. They're extremely significant for team and individual sport performance (Hanin, 2000). Emotions or feelings can provide participants with the energy that triggers the joy and ecstasy of performance. Or, they can drastically shift toward despair and hopelessness when things go wrong or expectations aren't met. Since emotions can be easily observed, they can be used to the performer's advantage or disadvantage as well as to the opponent's advantage or disadvantage.

Intensifying emotions requires a stimulus (or trigger). Once the trigger is removed, the participant can usually return to a more usual emotional state. Participants need to understand the causes and consequences of their dominant emotions and moods. The participants also need to know how to effectively control their emotions.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be a positive emotion when it reflects excitement or eagerness to perform well. That is, it can be positive if the participant feels well prepared and has coping responses in place to meet the demands of the task. But, anxiety can be a negative emotion if it reflects feelings of apprehension. Such negative feelings usually occur because the participant feels unprepared.

Anxiety states are normal. Every participant experiences both positive anxiety and negative anxiety in competitive or evaluative settings. Each participant should seek to identify and understand the specific causes of their anxiety and the resulting consequences for performance. Participants should also learn coping mechanisms to help them manage their anxiety and improve their performance accordingly.

Several skills can help participants control their anxiety, including breathing control exercises, mind-to-body relaxation exercises, body-to-mind relaxation exercises, imagery strategies, positive self-talk and thought-stopping techniques. These may be developed individually and then combined into routines that participants can develop, refine and implement in practice.

Types of anxiety

- Somatic or physical anxiety is a positive or negative set of physiological responses to performance. This anxiety is usually experienced immediately before the start of the competition. This anxiety takes the form of feelings of excitement, increased heart, increased breathing rate, ...
- Cognitive or mental anxiety is a positive or negative response that indicates excitement or worry, depending on how the participant perceives the demands of the task. For example, the participant may feel uncertain or apprehensive, be worried, or experience self-doubt about the performance process or outcome.
- Trait anxiety is a tendency to feel high levels or low levels of anxiety in response to a threatening situation, person or event. It's a personal character trait to be more or less anxious (apprehensive or excited).
- State anxiety is the feeling of apprehension or excitement that a participant perceives in the here and now. That is, at this precise moment in time and given the present situation.

Why is anxiety relevant to sport performance?

- Anxiety can be functional. It can improve performance by facilitating appropriate thoughts or actions.
- Anxiety can be dysfunctional. It can detract from performance by causing inappropriate thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Causes of anxiety

- Physical
 - tiredness or loss of sleep
 - poor or lengthy travel arrangements or other organizational problems
 - changes in environmental conditions
 - unexpected changes in competition or opponent
 - chronic adrenalin rush
 - physical tension or tightness due to previous activities
- Mental (cognitive)
 - fear of disappointing others (example: caregivers, teammates, coach)
 - fear of making a fool of themselves by failing at the task, especially when others are watching
 - fear of not being skilled enough or fit enough to meet the challenge
 - fear of not making a team selection or event selection
 - fear of injury or re-injury
 - perceived importance of the competition
 - poor travel arrangements or other organizational problems
 - changes in variables not in the participant's control (example: changes in weather)
 - other aspects of life that aren't easily "parked"
 - interruptions from others before or during competition (example: media, significant others)
 - poor decisions by officials
 - lack of social support

My notes

3.4.3 Stress

Competition is about testing a participant's abilities against either an opponent or the clock in a specific environment. By its very nature, competition may cause 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, 1970, p. 20). Therefore, participants experiencing stress are both recognizing a challenge and perceiving that they may not meet the challenge.

Stress can lead to anxiety: being excited, being uneasy, being worried. But, anxiety can be **positive** (excitement that contributes positively to performance) or **negative** (worry that detracts from performance). When participants become overly anxious and their anxiety level exceeds their coping abilities, their performance in competition may suffer. However, stress may also be positive and stimulate participants to focus, excel and even surpass previous performances.

- **Positive anxiety:** All participants will experience the stress of competition. Anxiety is a common and natural response to such stress. However, some participants don't become overly anxious when exposed to stress. Instead, those participants experience heightened awareness and usually can hardly wait for the competition to start. This is positive anxiety.
- **Negative anxiety:** Negative responses to anxiety usually occur in participants who dwell on things that are very difficult or impossible for them to control or participants who feel unprepared for the challenge they're facing. Negative anxiety is often linked to fear about what others will think of participants who don't perform well.

Stress and mental health

Mental illness (that is, mental injury) can happen when we face certain factors over an extended period of time that lead us to be unable to manage ourselves and our environment (for example, debilitating anxiety and stress). If you suspect someone of experiencing mental illness symptoms (injured and ill on the mental health continuum), it's important to refer this person to a qualified mental health practitioner such as a licensed psychologist, counsellor, psychotherapist or social worker. Many people who don't have any formal education, training and credentials claim expertise in the area of mental health and mental illness. Such claims are unethical, unprofessional and unacceptable as these people aren't qualified and can do more harm than good.

Using the continuum, it's good practice to check in with participants on a regular basis. Get a sense of where they are on the continuum so that proper support can be provided. Just as it's important to check in on participants' physical and mental states for performance reasons, it's also important to check in on their state of mental health and mental illness.

Encourage all participants with whom you work to check in using the continuum to build self-awareness and strengthen their mental health. The quicker they can address challenges along the continuum, the quicker they can get back to "healthy" states, increasing their chances to thrive in their performance environment. Model positive mental health behaviours by checking in with yourself too.

My notes

3.4.4 Normalization

Normalization refers to finding ways for participants to accept their feelings as a normal part of competing or performing.

Normalization technique:

- Connect participants with peers or experienced athletes to discuss the feeling of competing or performing.

My notes

3.4.5 Self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to understanding causes of stress and anxiety **without judgment**.

Techniques include:

- **Readiness check:** It's similar to how you check the temperature to determine if you're ready to go outside (example: Is it hotter or colder than you thought? Do you need a jacket?). For a readiness check, encourage participants to check their internal temperature before a performance to determine if they're ready. Do they feel prepared? Do they need to take a moment to re-centre themselves?
- **Scanning yourself:** Encourage participants to think of being in front of a mirror. Have the participants scan and note each element of their appearance, starting with footwear. Participants are using their senses to self-assess and identify areas of relaxation or tension. Finally, have the participants note what those combined elements indicate (example: My shoulders are tight and I'm thinking negatively about today's race. This could signal that I'm feeling anxiety and need to refocus.).

My notes

4 Setting goals

Objective: You'll be able to create SMART goals in relation to performance.

4.1 Motivation

Motivation is the intention to repeat a behaviour (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Motivation is influenced by 3 main factors:

- **Desire for achievement:** a wish to improve, master new skills and pursue excellence. Achievement-motivated participants respond very positively to setting goals. Setting goals gives such participants consistent opportunities to succeed by meeting the objectives they set. Here are a few ideas for making sure that participants' needs for achievement are fulfilled:
 - Point out individual improvement.
 - Keep written records of progress in diaries or logs.
 - Schedule competitions with suitable opponents.
 - Meet regularly to discuss progress and re-evaluate goals.
- **Need for affiliation:** a desire to have positive, friendly relationships with or acceptance by others
- **Desire for self-direction:** a wish to feel a sense of control, to feel in charge

These 3 factors are also core measures of good mental health.

4.1.1 What can you do to slightly modify your practice environment to increase participants' motivation?

4.2 Setting goals

Setting goals is a key skill in developing mental skills. Goals support participants by leveraging their motivation.

Outcome, Performance and Process Goals

Definitions

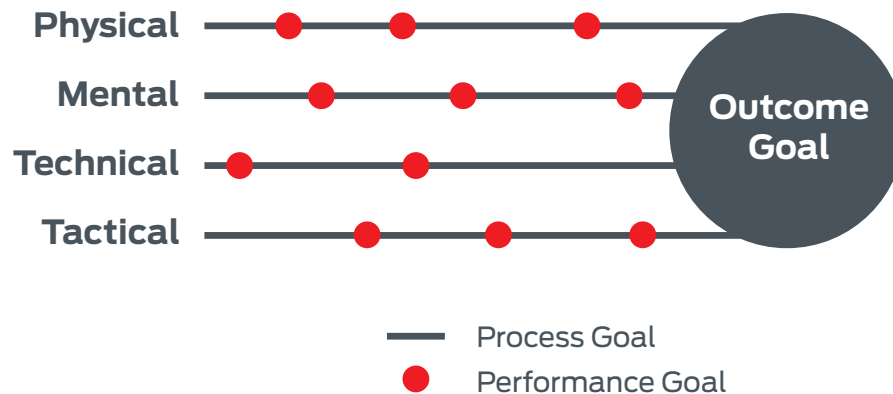
- **Outcome goals:** what a participant wishes to achieve
 - For example, ranking in a league or in an individual race, winning a game
- **Performance goals:** represent changes in performance relative to the participant's existing performance
 - For example, improvements in fitness levels, maximum bench press
- **Process goals:** how the participant will reach the outcome or performance goal
 - For example, how much training, the type of warm-up you'll do

(source: Weinberg, 2013)

Process goals (represented by lines) and performance goals (the circles) help to achieve outcome goals.

Continuing to set and achieve process and performance goals moves participants closer toward reaching their outcome goal.

An outcome goal may be supported by many performance and process goals that are physical, mental, technical or tactical.



Goal	Example
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win 4 out of 7 games to qualify for the end-of-season playoffs. • By the end of the season, identify for a full month as “healthy” on the mental health continuum.
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental: For the next 4 games, regain focus within 10 seconds when the other team gets a goal. • Physical: Improve my sprint speed by 1.5 seconds over the next 30 days. • Technical: Successfully do a back stick shot 95% of the time, for the next 30 days. • Tactical: As a team, improve defence formation in power play, by 45% over the next 14 days. • Manage anxious feelings before the start of the next 4 competitions.
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a pre-game warm-up before each game, for the entire season. • Debrief the logbook on a weekly basis. • Follow my dietitian’s recommended meal plan and track progress for the entire season. • Perform a mindfulness technique before every practice and competition this month.

For goals to become meaningful, they must be related to a time period, either the long or the short term.

- **Long-term goals** are goals that are to be realized by the end of a season (or even years later in some cases).
- **Short-term goals** are the small steps taken right away to reach the desired long-term goal.

The types of goals being set and the nature of those goals will vary according to the type of sport (example: team or individual sport). As well, some participants may be part of a team, but their performance is entirely individual, for example, downhill skiers. In that case, the team may focus on goals designed to improve team atmosphere and cohesion. Those goals of the team can create an environment in which individual self-improvement goals may be set.

There’s absolutely nothing wrong with setting long-term dream goals such as making the national team or competing at the Olympic Games. In fact, most athletes who eventually achieve this type of goal did have it as one of their dream goals in their early competitive years.

Setting long-term and short-term goals makes it possible for participants to chart a path toward a dream goal and find satisfaction and motivation along the way.

4.2.1 Establishing goals

For each goal, you should consider the following 4 elements:

Element	Description	Example
Goal statement	What is the goal? State the goal and discuss if it's an outcome goal or performance goal. Ensure that it's SMART.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a team, we'll score at least 3 times in our final game this season.
Control of achievement	Who has control of achieving the goal? Identify who has control of achieving this goal: Is it the participant alone? Coaches? Competitors? Judges?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members and coaches Referees Competitors
Conditions	Which conditions must be in place for the goal to be achieved? Identify key conditions that will ensure success in achieving this goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All players must feel as if they have a say in the goal and they must buy into it individually and collectively. All players and coach are practising self-awareness and self-regulation.
Process	<p>How will the goal be achieved? Include simple process goals that are required to achieve this goal. Process goals should integrate physical, mental, technical and tactical elements (as appropriate). Include a minimum of 3 process goals per outcome goal.</p> <p>Remember that process goals are also SMART.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our team will develop, practise and implement 3 new plays at our mid-season competition (tactical). Our team will drill pass for 18 minutes with 100% accuracy (no missed passes) within the first 2 months of the season (technical). Our team will implement a centering routine within the first month of the season and use the routine before each competition (mental). Every member of our team is able to increase their vertical jump by 10% (physical).

Remember: you're to be a facilitator as your participants set goals. For participants to take ownership of goals and to feel motivated to achieve them, the participants themselves must set the goals. To be effective in facilitating goal setting, gather the following information:

- Current status of the participant or team (Meaning what is today's performance level?)
- Record of previous performances by this participant or team
- Training time available
- Type of competitions and competitions available

- Age-group norms and performance improvement potential for this age group during a specific time period (This is hard for novice coaches to gauge. If you're unsure of how to gauge it, consult expert coaches for the age group you're working with.)
- Growth and development considerations for this age group

SMART goals

In order to be effective, a goal statement should be SMART by responding to each of these elements:



Example goal statements:

Simple goal	SMART goal
Have fun.	At the end of this season, 90% of participants on our team report that they'll continue with the sport next season, because they enjoyed playing this season.
Score more goals.	Double the number of goals in competition by mid-season.
Be faster.	Reduce my overall time in each race by 1 second at the next competition by focusing on developing my sprinting skills.

4.2.2 Draft 2 SMART goals of your own: 1 performance goal and 1 mental health goal. Once you have completed the tables, find a partner, share your goals and provide feedback to one another.

Goal 1

Element	How to complete	Response
Goal statement	What is the goal? State the goal and discuss if it's an mental health goal or performance goal. Ensure that it's SMART.	
Control of achievement	Who has control of achieving the goal? Identify who has control of achieving this goal: Is it the participant alone? Coaches? Competitors? Judges?	
Conditions	Which conditions must be in place for the goal to be achieved? Identify key conditions that will ensure success in achieving this goal.	
Process	How will the goal be achieved? Include simple process goals that are required to achieve this goal. Process goals should integrate physical, mental, technical and tactical elements (as appropriate). Include a minimum of 3 process goals per outcome goal. Remember that process goals are also SMART.	Technical:
		Tactical:
		Mental:
		Physical:

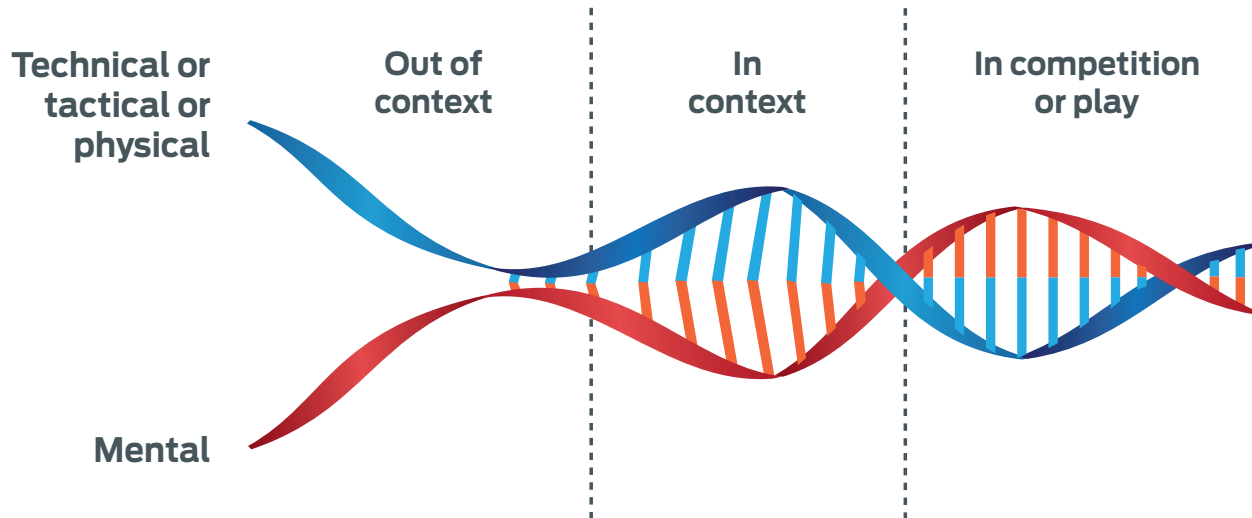
Goal 2

Element	How to complete	Response
Goal statement	What is the goal? State the goal and discuss if it's an mental health goal or performance goal. Ensure that it's SMART.	
Control of achievement	Who has control of achieving the goal? Identify who has control of achieving this goal: Is it the participant alone? Coaches? Competitors? Judges?	
Conditions	Which conditions must be in place for the goal to be achieved? Identify key conditions that will ensure success in achieving this goal.	
Process	How will the goal be achieved? Include simple process goals that are required to achieve this goal. Process goals should integrate physical, mental, technical and tactical elements (as appropriate). Include a minimum of 3 process goals per outcome goal. Remember that process goals are also SMART.	Technical:
		Tactical:
		Mental:
		Physical:

5 Planning for mental skill development

Objective: You'll be able to integrate mental skill development into seasonal and practice planning.

5.1 Seasonal road maps



5.1.1 Mapping mental skills

In groups, fill in the technical skill progression in the table below and identify where in the season (beginning, middle, end) your participant may focus on each element of the progression.

Skill	Beginning of the season (out of context)	Middle of the season (in context)	End of the season (in competition or play)
Technical, tactical or physical			
Mental			

5.1.2 Reflection

Have I appropriately integrated the development of mental skills?

What trade-offs might I be required to make to have space for mental skill development?

Where do I foresee the greatest benefits for my participant(s)?

My notes

5.2 Mental skills in a practice

It's likely that outside of practice times you don't have the chance to interact much with the participants you coach. And, it may be impossible to dedicate separate practices to work on mental preparation. As was the case for planning for mental preparation within a season, there are no hard-and-fast rules for when to develop mental skills within a practice. However, there are some widely accepted, general guidelines, and of course, many other options. The key to successful mental training is to find creative ways to integrate it into your day-to-day practices so it becomes a habit for participants. Possibilities are shown below.

Stage	Possible ways to integrate during the stage
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow a few minutes for chatting so participants can start to focus on the practice. ● Gauge arousal level and do relaxation or energizing exercises, if necessary. ● Set goals for the practice or remind participants of their goals for the practice. ● Provide a visual of drills/games that participants will do during the main part of the practice. This helps participants start to create visual images. Have participants rehearse what they'll be doing (example: sprint straight, cut left, turn and receive).
Warm-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To stimulate shifts in focus, include a variety of activities that change frequently. ● Make the movements of the specific warm-up similar to the movements that participants will perform in the main part. That way, participants can get a feel for what they'll be doing while they're visualizing it. ● Check with individual participants to make sure they understand their goals for the practice. ● Set cue words for the activities or drills.
Main part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gauge arousal level and focus before each new activity or drill. ● Ask participants to visualize successful performance of an activity or drill while waiting for a turn or recovering. ● Say cue words before and during each attempt, and ask participants to do the same. ● Ask participants to refocus and visualize after each attempt, especially to re-instill a successful image after a failed attempt. ● Videotape participants to show them their successful performances and to create images of positive accomplishments.
Cool-down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include relaxation and return-to-calm exercises. ● Check if individual and group goals for the practice were met.
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Debrief the practice. ● Check if individual and group goals for the practice were met. ● Ask participants what went well and what needs improvement. ● Set goals for the next practice/competition.

5.3 Sample plans

The practice plans that follow are each examples from the season. In pairs or small groups, select 1 of the practice plans. Discuss and determine how and where you would integrate basic mental skill development in various sections of the practice plan. Write your reflections in the text box provided.

Team sport: Rugby

Practice Plan							
Team:	High school	Date:	April 14, 2016	Time from:	3 pm	to	5 pm
Age/level:	14 to 16 years old						
Location:	Indoor dome turf field						
Objective:	Improve contact skills (tackle)						
Equipment needed:	Balls, cones, pop bags, sausage bags, tennis balls, pinnies						
Introduction	Today, we'll address the tackle, on both attack and defence. We'll work on footwork, proper body shape and technique.					Key message/safety	
Warm-up	General: Cone flip drill x 3					Key message/safety	
	a. 2 teams; 30 seconds to flip or unflip the cones, team with the most flipped or unflipped wins					Ensure pairs are spaced apart. Keep intensity from escalating too quickly, while still warming up	
	Specific: Contact					Equipment needed	
a. Knee-slapping game, pairs, 15 seconds					Cones, tennis balls, balls, pop bags, sausage bags		
b. Pairs, seated back-to-back, link arms, force partner to go in 1 direction, partner resists, 10 seconds							
c. Same as in #2, but face-to-face from knees, pay attention to the order of activities							
Main part	How to fall:					Key message/safety	
	a. Explain about knees, hips, shoulders					Ensure proper spacing between athletes. Focus on technique rather than power.	
b. Practise stationary, no ball, sideways and forward							
c. Practise walking (2 lines, 10 metres apart, athletes 5 metres apart), no ball							
d. Add ball, talk about 3 points of contact and placement							
e. Practice walking with ball, 3 points of contact, progress to placement							
f. Progress to jog, groups of 5, fall, place, continue							
g. Progress to only fall when teammate tells you to							
Body Shape:							
a. Explain and demo with the team: TRex hands, eyes through sunglasses, flat back, knees and hips bent							
b. Practise all together, practise in pairs							

Main part	<p>Tackle from Knees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explain and demo with the team b. Groups of 3, on knees, tennis balls x 2, no ball c. Two outside players face 1 way, the middle player faces the other d. Tackle 1 way, back to knees, tackle the other way, rotate <p>Tackle from Standing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explain and demo b. 1 on 1, walking, with ball c. Defence: shape, cheek to cheek, squeeze all the way to ground, roll and up fast d. Attack: fall properly, placement <p>Head-to-head drill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 1 on 1, lying on backs, head to head, up and tackle or up and run on b. GO, team game (attack/defence) <p>Small-sided games:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 5 on 5, 1 on 1 tackle, no ruck, tackler rolls away, tackled player places, next player picks up and must pass, defence must retreat 2 metres <p>Defense footwork with bags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explain and demo b. Cones form a square, 1 on 1, 1 with bag, players start facing each other, bag jogs across square, tackler hits, squeezes and drives c. Defence: same foot, same shoulder but more emphasis on squaring up and hitting with shoulder instead of arms d. Back to games <p>Attack footwork with bags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explain and demo b. 1 sausage up front, 2 bags back to either side, player with ball in hands, 877ep first bag, lower shoulder into side bag and drive c. Attack: footwork, 2 hands on ball, 3 points of contact, square, shape, leg drive <p>Back to games.</p>	<p>Equipment needed</p> <p>Cones, tennis balls, balls, pop bags, sausage bags</p>
	<p>Games, active cool-down, extra time:</p> <p>360 Backpack and race:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pairs, player makes a 360 around their partner without touching the ground, runs around large circle and hops back on back <p>Chaser:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Groups of 6 to 7, designate 1 chaser, designate 1 target, team links arms and circles back and forth, chaser must tag target 	<p>Key message/safety</p> <p>Keep it fun</p>
Conclusion	<p>Ask athletes to summarize key points from the session regarding safety, body shape and proper technique. What did they learn? What was fun?</p>	<p>Key message/safety</p>

Basic Mental Skills Integration

Endurance sport: Athletics

Practice Plan						
Team:	High school team	Date:	April 1, 2019	Time from:	3:30 pm	to 4:30 pm
Age/level:	16 to 17 years old					
Location:	High school track or park					
Objective:	Start building the aerobic system					
Equipment needed:	Foam rollers, hurdles, balls, cones, pop bags, sausage bags, tennis balls, pinnies					
Introduction	Workout will be an easy run with some strides, with a drills warm-up.					Key message/safety
Warm-up	10-minute easy jog, followed by foam rolling, then dynamic stretching Leg swings (10 each leg, lateral and medial), hurdle drills (20 metres 1 leg over hurdle every 1 to 2 metres) Lunge matrix (multi-directional lunge) Drills, 30 metres each: a. Jog back: A-skip, B-skip, butt-kicks b. Strides: 4 to 6 x gradual accelerations over 30 to 50 metres					Key message/safety
						Warming up the body Working on range of motion Preparing the body for movement
						Equipment needed
						Foam rollers, hurdles
Main part	45- to 75-minute run (depending on ability) on soft trails with 4 to 6 x 15-second accelerations with full recovery					Key message/safety
						Run in a group, as much as possible, at a relaxed, conversational pace. During accelerations, focus and ensure good footing in the trail.
						Equipment needed
						Clothing appropriate for weather (hat, rain jacket, if necessary)
Cool-down	Jog back to track. Foam rolling and static stretching, as needed. Hydrate and snack, not because it was a particularly strenuous workout, but to create good habits (part of building psychological and emotional aspects of training).					Key message/safety

Conclusion	<p>Remind athletes that we're in a building phase and that consistency and easy volume are the main elements of training.</p> <p>After the workout, athletes should be pleasantly tired, but not sore and ready to come back and do the same the next day.</p> <p>There will be faster workouts at other moments in the week. This particular session was an example to emphasize the importance of easy aerobic work at this time of year.</p>	Key message/safety

Basic Mental Skills Integration

Combative sport: Karate

Practice Plan							
Team:	Gatineau Dojo	Date:	April 21, 2019	Time from:	7 pm	to	8:30 pm
Age/level:	12 to 14 years old						
Location:	Karate club (Dojo)						
Objective:	a. Reverse punch + jab blitz b. Decision training after a clash						
Equipment needed:	Agility ladders, elastics, gloves, shin pads, mouth guard						
Introduction	You'll need your protective gear for this practice. We'll be training the reverse punch and jab blitz with a focus on speed. We will be working with partners. We'll also be doing decision-training drills after clashes.						Key message/safety
							Wear your protective gear, including mouth guard
Warm-up	General warm-up: a. Jog 2 tatamis lengths; b. Do 2 lengths of kareoka; c. Do 2 lengths of dynamic front side knee raises; d. Agility ladder drill A (side-side) and drill B (out-side-inside); e. Do 10 dynamic leg raises front and side; f. Do 2 lengths of forward and backward lunges; g. Do 10 trunk rotations; h. Rotate shoulders 10 times.						Key message/safety
	Specific warm-up: a. With a partner, alternate roundhouse kicks going higher and higher; b. With a partner, alternate hook kicks going higher and higher; c. With a partner, do 10 blitzes each side.						Be progressive in range of motion for dynamic stretches
							Equipment needed
						Agility ladder	
Main part	Drill 1: Get into groups of 3. Participant #1 will hold an elastic band around participant #2 (for resistance). Participant #3 will be in a push-up position. Participant #2 will jump over participant #3, and as they land, they will do a blitz over 3 sprint steps. After 6 repetitions, rotate so that Participant #3 is holding the elastic.						Key message/safety
	Drill 2: With a partner, alternate roundhouse kicks to the body, 10 repetitions each side.						a. As soon as you touch the ground, you must explode
	Drill 3: Do reverse punch-jab blitzes with opponent moving back slightly, 10 repetitions each side with each partner.						b. Ensure kicks are low, just over the belt
	Drill 4: With a partner simulate a clash. Defender (Uke) has the option to: a. stay on the spot, b. move back or c. attack forward. Attacker (Tori) will react accordingly:						c. Attack on the outside of the opponent's guard
If Uke stays on the spot, Tori will attack with a roundhouse kick.						d. Determine who is Uke and who is Tori. Start in a clinch position.	
If Uke moves back, Tori will attack with a blitz.						Equipment needed	
If Uke attacks forward, Tori will escape backward at an angle.						Protective gear and mouth guard	

Cool-down	Light sparring Light static stretches Kneeling bow (seiza)	Key message/safety
		Low intensity and reduced speed
Conclusion	Blitzes are fast attacks that cover a short to long distance. It's important not to set forward with the front foot. You must dive in.	Key message/safety

Basic Mental Skills Integration

On-water sport: Canoe-kayak

Practice Plan		
Team:	Team X	
Date:	July 22, 2019	
Time from:	4 pm	
to:	6 pm	
Age/level:	U13 kayak	
Location:	River	
Objective:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop speed and aerobic capacity b. Develop effective catch from strong set-up c. Develop focusing skills 	
Equipment needed:	Dryland: pylons On-water: Singles kayak and canoes, paddles, PFDs, safety boat, safety kit, foam balls (different colours)	
Introduction	5 minutes a. Greet participants at judges' tower and welcome them. b. "Sharing circle" with question, "Name 1 thing you'll do this practice to improve your performance or technique." c. Review previous practice. Provide reminders about logistics for race on the upcoming weekend. d. Outline the objectives of the practice. Give an overview of the activities in the practice.	Key message/safety On-water safety reminders: PFDs, EAP, on-water, meeting points
	Dryland (10 minutes): a. Easy jog, 5 minutes. b. Dynamic warm-up: high knees; lunge walk with rotation; shuffle - rotate - sumo squat; skipping; can-openers (shuffle - high knee - abduction); I-T-W-Y (6); dynamic planks (4 each side) Game (5 minutes): Freeze tag game that rotates between athletes being "it" every 1 minute. Athletes who are tagged are to freeze with feet wide apart. Other athletes can free them by crawling under their legs. On-water (10 minutes): Easy paddling (aerobic capacity)	Key message/safety a. Keep head up while playing tag b. Buddy system for on water warm-up Equipment needed Dryland: pylons On-water: singles kayak or canoes, paddles, PFDs
Main part	Skill development (10 minutes): Technical activities to work on catch, each activity is done 3 x 30 seconds, 1-minute break a. Pause paddling 3 x at set-up, hold set-up position for 2 seconds b. Spearfishing catch entry drill, focus on using hands to "stab" blade into the water. For kayak, alternate left and right side. c. Lower-body focus, canoers use hips forward, paddle with paddling side hip forward; kayakers should exaggerate holding opposite leg down, pressure on footboard until catch Speed (15 minutes): 2 x (4 x 5 seconds/1-minute rest) / 5-minutes rest (easy paddling) between sets. Make sure paddlers start each interval together/at same time. Scavenger hunt (35 minutes): Put athletes into groups of 2 or 3. Athletes paddle with partners to collect as many balls as they can as a team in 30 minutes. Athletes must return a ball back to home base after they get it. Balls have a different point value depending on distance from club dock.	Key message/safety Technique: a. Use hands/arms to put blade in the water b. Quiet blade entry, "no splash" at catch Safety: Buddy system during aerobic capacity work and stay to right on river Equipment needed Singles kayaks and canoes, paddles, PFDs, safety boat, safety kit, foam balls (different colours)

Cool-down	Easy paddle (10 minutes) Static stretching (10 minutes). Do a debrief during stretching.	Key message/safety
		Low intensity and reduced speed
Conclusion	Summarize and review technical activities about catch. Follow-up question from introductory activity: "Did you improve your performance or technique at today's practice?"	Key message/safety

Basic Mental Skills Integration

Precision sport: Shooting

Practice Plan						
Team:	Athlete #1	Date:	March 4, 2019	Time from:	5 pm	to 7 pm
Age/level:	14, beginner					
Location:	Range					
Objective:	Basic Intro					
Equipment needed:	Loose comfortable clothing, shooting gear, rifle, targets, pellets					
Introduction	Introduce all concepts, approaches, principals and path of development for air rifle shooting.					Key message/safety
	Describe the importance of range and firearms safety! Describe the need for regular exercises in both physical and mental disciplines.					Introduce and promote the sport and its safety concepts
Warm-up	Basic static stretches. Keep the heart rate low.					Key message/safety
						The need for physical condition and agility
						Equipment needed Loose, comfortable clothing
Main part	Detailed demonstration of standing position:					Key message/safety
	a. Start with athlete on the line. Have the athlete build the position. b. Focus on each body part (1 at a time) to develop an understanding of how and why each body part is set. c. Have athlete provide feedback on how the position feels with respect to balance, fatigue and comfort.					The importance of how each body part affects the standing position.
						Equipment needed Shooting gear / rifle
Cool-down	Debrief the practice session with the athlete.					Key message/safety
	Provide instruction and direction on how to improve or change a particular aspect of their standing position. Encourage feedback from the athlete.					Encouragement with constructive feedback
Conclusion	Describe details for next practice.					Key message/safety
						Progression encouragement

Basic Mental Skills Integration

6 Conclusion

6.1 Action card

Action card	
Date:	Location:
I will start...	
I will stop...	
I will continue...	

6.2 Self-assessment

This self-assessment is an opportunity for you to reflect on your current coaching practices. The items listed below are the tasks that a Coach Evaluator will be looking for you to successfully complete during assignments and observations. The self-assessment will help you identify your areas of strength and areas for improvement.

For each statement presented below, **select the option that best represents whether you achieve the statement** (never, sometimes, often, always).

I am able to...	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Integrate mental preparation strategies into practices				
Help participants be mentally prepared for competition.				

My notes

Coaching contacts

Stay connected within the coaching community in Canada! For coaching tips and more information about coaching modules, visit the Coaching Association of Canada website, and follow us on social media.

-  www.coach.ca
-  [@CAC_ACE](https://www.facebook.com/CAC_ACE)
-  [@CAC_ACE](https://twitter.com/CAC_ACE)
-  [@coach.ca](https://www.instagram.com/coach.ca)
-  [coach.ca](https://www.youtube.com/coach.ca)



Appendix A: Practitioner designations

Counsellors

Counsellors hold a master's degree in counselling or a related field. They're trained to treat, but not diagnose, mental illness or distress. Counsellors also focus on mental health, wellness, relationships, personal growth and career development by applying recognized psychotherapies and principles (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/profession-and-regulation/>).

Psychiatrists

Medical doctors (MDs) who are licensed to practise psychiatry by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada or by a provincial or territorial college, or they hold other specialist qualifications in psychiatry as recognized by the Canadian Psychiatric Association. Psychiatrists are qualified to diagnose mental health disorders and can prescribe and use medication to help manage these disorders. Some psychiatrists also do psychotherapy, similar to psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association, <https://cpa.ca/public%20/whatisapsychologist/>).

Psychologists

Psychologists hold a master's or doctoral degree in psychology. They're certified by the College of Psychology for the province or territory in which they practice. They are trained to use psychological tests to assess and diagnose mental health disorders, as well as problems in thinking, feeling and behaving. They help people overcome or manage these problems using a variety of treatments or psychotherapies (Canadian Psychological Association, <https://cpa.ca/public%20/whatisapsychologist/>).

Psychotherapists

Psychotherapists hold a master's degree in psychology or counselling. They're trained to assess and treat, but not diagnose, cognitive, emotional or behavioral disturbances by psychotherapeutic means. The work of psychotherapists is similar to that of counsellors, and differences usually relate more to the individual's training (for example, areas of specialization), interests and work setting, rather than to intrinsic differences between psychotherapists' and counsellors' types of therapeutic activities (College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario, n.d., <https://www.crho.ca/about-psychotherapists-professional-regulation/>).

Appendix B: Techniques for improving and maintaining focus

B.1 Concentration techniques

Concentrating on a clock face

Learning to concentrate is a prerequisite of learning to focus on internal and external cues.

Technique

1. Find an analog watch or clock that has a second hand on which you can focus. If you only have a digital watch or clock, check if you can switch it to an analog display showing the second hand.
2. Focus on the second hand as it makes 1 complete revolution, turning from a starting number and returning to that same number. Blink your eyes or snap your fingers every 5 seconds.
3. After 1 complete revolution of the second hand, concentrate on the second hand as it makes another complete revolution. This time, blink your eyes or snap your fingers every 10 seconds.
4. For the third revolution, as you concentrate on the second hand, blink your eyes after the first 5 seconds, snap your fingers after the next 5 seconds, and keep alternating between blinking and snapping at 5second intervals for the entire revolution.

Practising this exercise a few times a day gradually improves the ability to concentrate.

Concentrating on an object

Learning to concentrate is a prerequisite of learning to focus on internal and external cues.

Technique

1. Choose a concentration word.
 - For example, if you're in a ball-oriented sport, choose the word ball. If you aren't in a ball-oriented sport, choose a short, soft, non-distracting word that will help you focus on an object or picture as you concentrate on it, For example, run, goal, lane or arm. Look at the object and say your concentration word. Repeating a word helps keep the mind from wandering.
2. Look at the object of concentration.
 - Now, begin to examine every detail of the object on which you're concentrating. For example, look at a ball's outline, at its surface. Is it rough or smooth? Does it have seams, dimples or printing on it? Are there scratches or scuff marks? Look at its colours and the way the light and shadows fall on its surface. Don't try to stop yourself from blinking. Relax.
3. Feel the object.
 - For instance, pick up a ball. Feel the ball's texture. Turn it around and look at it from various angles.
4. Imagine the object.
 - Continuing with the ball example, put down the ball. Focus your mind and eyes on the ball. See the ball as fully as you can so that its smallest detail will stand out in your mind. Know the ball. Don't try to overpower the object of your concentration. As you relax and keep your eye on the object, you'll find it will seem to come to you. You must maintain something of a passive attitude in this process. Allow the object of your concentration to enter your mind fully and not simply be something external that you're studying. When you concentrate, you'll find that this seemingly mysterious process happens quite naturally.
5. Get the feeling.
 - When your concentration breaks (and it will), say to yourself, "I've been concentrating on [the name of the object]. This is what it feels like to be concentrating. I'm relaxed, I feel good and my attention is totally focused on [the name of the object]. This is concentration." Look back at the object.
6. Say the concentration word again.
 - Now say the concentration word to yourself. Look at the object. Concentrate.
7. Relax.
 - Use your preferred relaxation technique.

This material is based on Tutko (1976).

Sound focus

Sound focus is an easy game that you can do anywhere. It helps you practise shifting your attention from wide to narrow and vice versa.

Technique

1. Close your eyes and pay attention to 1 specific sound wherever you are.
2. Count to 10 slowly, while maintaining your focus on that 1 sound.
3. After the 10 counts, switch to pay attention to all the sounds around you. Count to 10 slowly again.
 - As you become more efficient at maintaining your concentration, you can also alternate between 2 to 3 sounds.
 - Participants may find it easier to start with their eyes closed. They can progress to eyes open to increase the difficulty.

B.2 Controlled breathing

Heart rate isn't the only sign of anxiety. Breathing rate and depth are also indicators of anxiety. Managing breathing rate and depth is a prerequisite of relaxation. Relaxation is in turn a prerequisite of imagery (section B.4 of [Appendix B](#)).

Kinesthetic controlled breathing

Technique

1. Close your eyes.
2. Feel your stomach move out. Keep your chest and shoulders steady.
3. Slowly inhale for approximately 5 seconds. Feel the air increase in your chest and your shoulders rise.
4. Hold your breath for approximately 3 seconds.
5. Slowly exhale for approximately 5 seconds. Feel tension release as your shoulders and chest drop, and your stomach relaxes.
6. Kinesthetic breathing can shift into audio-controlled breathing.

Audio-controlled breathing

Technique

1. Close your eyes.
2. Hear yourself slowly inhale and exhale air as you breathe.
3. Slowly inhale.
4. Hear the air pass through your mouth and nose.
5. Feel the build-up of tension in your chest.
6. Slowly release the air.
7. Hear the sound of air passing through your nose and mouth.

Debrief

Note that you're also focusing on certain cues (kinesthetic and auditory). In other words, focus and relaxation skills are mutually dependent.

B.3 Relaxation techniques

Mind-to-body control

Procedure

1. Select a quiet environment.
2. Get into a comfortable position and close your eyes.
3. Low lighting or a dark area may help you to perfect this technique.
4. Concentrate fully on taking 2 or 3 deep breaths (don't hyperventilate, breathe under control).
5. Become aware of your breathing. While breathing out, repeat a word or phrase like a mantra (example: slow, easy, calm, relaxed). Breathe in, pause, breathe out, and repeat. Continue to repeat for 10 to 20 minutes.
6. Adopt a passive attitude. Allow any distractions that enter the mind to pass right through. Let thoughts that arise slip through your mind like the credits at the end of a movie. They're there, but you pay little attention to them as they scroll by.
7. Allow relaxation to occur at its own pace.
8. Over time, the relaxation response will occur more quickly.

Body-to-Mind Control

Tips

- Demonstrate this technique with shoulder contractions to differentiate it from the mind-to-body technique.
- It's strongly suggested that you modify the contraction-relaxation phase of the exercise for individuals who are hypertensive or who recently suffered a cardiovascular injury such as a heart attack or a stroke. Ensure that anyone with such conditions gently flexes and relaxes their muscles. Under no circumstances should such individuals engage in progressive maximal tightening or contraction exercises.

Procedure

1. Select a quiet room with dim lighting. Make sure there will be no distractions or interruptions.
2. Check to see that participants are warmly dressed and that their clothing is dry and comfortable.
3. Have participants choose a mat and set it around the room so that there's at least 1 metre between mats.
4. Explain the principle behind relaxing:
 - Relaxation is important.
 - Relaxation will help you rest and sleep.
 - When you contract a muscle and then relax it, the muscle returns to a more relaxed state than it was in before the contraction took place.

- Body-to-mind relaxation requires you to progressively contract and relax your muscles to produce whole-body relaxation.
 - The first session will take approximately 30 minutes.
5. Instruct participants to start in the anatomical position (lie on your back with your arms at your side) on a mat.
 6. Have participants check that they're positioned correctly on the mat in the following ways:
 - The middle of your head is touching the mat and you're looking straight up.
 - Your shoulders are pressing on the mat.
 - Your buttocks are pressing equally on the mat.
 - Your calves are pressing equally on the mat.
 - Your heels are pressing equally on the mat.
 - You should be lying straight on the mat. Your spine should be straight, your thighs and calves are close together and touching lightly, and your arms are extended by your side with your palms facing slightly up. Check for the last time that you're straight and relaxed. Make sure that the pressure of your body parts on the mat is equal on both sides of your body. You'll find this easier if you lightly close your eyes."
 7. Walk among the participants to see that they're positioned correctly. It's preferable that participants not use head pillows or wear shoes.
 8. Continue with instructions:
 - Now, we're going to do a series of exercises. Each exercise has a sequence involving a very hard contraction, a hold and a release. During this contract-hold-release sequence, the hold period lasts 4 to 5 seconds. Then, slowly relax the body part or muscle you contracted. When you do the exercises, contract only the muscles involved in that exercise.
 9. It's good practice to do a preliminary practice exercise involving the shoulders (tension is often present in this part of the body). Instruct participants in the following way:
 - Contract! Shrug your shoulders and progressively tighten the shoulder muscles, but nothing else. Count 1-2-3. Relax slowly to your side. Feel your shoulders relax. They may tingle a little, feel heavy or feel warm.
 10. It may be necessary to remind participants to contract only the muscle or body part mentioned in the instructions.
 11. Progress from the toes to the top of the head. After the first 2 sequences, introduce concentrating on breathing control. By the time the exercises are finished, the focus should be on breathing control and the total heaviness of the body.

B.4 Imagery techniques

Find yourself at home: Imagery in practice

The following is an example of an activity to introduce participants to imagery. The activity starts with imagining a daily activity to which participants can relate. The activity progresses to a sport-specific application.

- Integrate imagery into daily training. Whenever you make a technical suggestion or correction, ask participants to visualize the change or correction in their mind before physically trying it.
- Start by imagining a skill the participants are already good at or any past good performance. This ensures the participants will be able to see and feel the skill or performance.
- At the start, have your participants practise imagery for 3 to 5 minutes a few times per week.
- Once you're sure your participants can use imagery effectively, encourage them to start imagining races or game performances.
- If a participant gets stuck on a negative image, like falling during practice, have that participant go back to imagining a simpler skill. A simpler skill would be a skill the participant can imagine successfully performing.

Procedure

1. Visualize a daily activity:
 - Sit in a relaxed position and close your eyes.
 - Imagine you're walking into your home, through the door and into your kitchen. Hear any sounds that might be in this kitchen, see the colours and smell the smells. Is your mom there? Walk over to the fridge and open it.
 - Feel the cool air that hits you when you open the door and the light comes on. Find out where the lemons are and pull out a big yellow lemon. Feel the weight of the lemon in your hand and feel its texture.
 - Close the fridge door. Find a cutting board and knife. Cut the lemon in half. See the beads of juice on the knife and smell the lemon's scent. Now cut the lemon into quarters. Pick up 1 of the lemon's 4 quarters, smell it and bite into it.
2. Reflecting on your visualization, answer each of the questions below with a rating from 1 to 10. When you answer with ratings, 1 means "Not at all" and 10 means "Very clearly."
 - How much could you smell the lemon?
 - How much could you feel the lemon, door handle and house?
 - How much could you taste the lemon?
 - How much could you hear sounds?
 - How much could you feel your body moving?
 - Did you see in colour or in black and white? (answer without rating)
3. Discuss your visualization with other participants.

4. Visualize a sport-specific skill. Choose a simple skill in your sport, for example, a shot in basketball. This visualization helps you “feel” movements and enhances the physical skill involved. For basketball:
 - Start by shooting 1 metre from the hoop and making the shot. Next, repeat the same shot with your eyes closed.
 - Then, look at the hoop’s rim, close your eyes and “see” the rim. Now, see and “feel” the ball going into the hoop. Then, shoot the ball.
 - Repeat this visualization step by step, and each time, gradually increase your distance from the basket.

Inside out: External concentration

The ability to shuttle between internal and external focus is necessary in games such as football. A football quarterback must:

- focus on a set of broad-external cues (example: the game unfolding right there)
- shift to a narrow-external cue (example: the receiver’s running pattern)
- shift to an internal focus (example: deciding how and when to throw the ball)

Procedure

1. Have the participants close their eyes and tune in to a sensation, feeling or thought. Have the participants say something like “Now I’m aware of a pain in my leg,” “Now I’m aware of my breathing” or “Now I’m feeling silly.”
2. Next, have the participants open their eyes and say, “Now I’m aware of...,” adding something that’s happening outside of themselves. For instance, “Now I’m aware of the sunlight” or “Now I’m aware of your eyes.”
3. Repeat the process (first an inside statement, then an outside one) for a few minutes without a break. If a participant gets stuck, help out by prompting “Now I am aware of...?”
4. Later, have participants repeat the exercise with their eyes open the entire time.

This exercise on shuttling is based on Syer & Connolly (1998).

The shake-up: Recognizing and replacing thoughts

Negative thoughts (example: I'm scared I may get hurt again. I may lose this game because...) are distractions that decrease the ability to concentrate and focus on important environmental cues. To become aware of negative thoughts, participant must first recognize that these thoughts exist. Negative thoughts may occur very rapidly and be automatic. Awareness of these thoughts is essential to stopping and replacing them. Negative thoughts are very natural for both the participant and teammates after someone has suffered a concussion or an injury of any type.

Encourage participants to listen to their internal thoughts the next time performance-related anxiety happens. You may ask participants to consider and note:

- What are the thoughts?
- In what conditions do the thoughts typically occur?
- How do these thoughts make you feel?

Procedure

1. Sit quietly, close your eyes and relax. Recall any situation in which negative thoughts have affected your sport performance.
2. Sense the feelings and actions that accompany these negative thoughts.
3. Think "stop." Immediately replace negative thoughts with more appropriate ones.
4. Sense the feelings and actions accompanying these new thoughts.
5. Think about how the feelings and actions associated with the old thoughts differed from those associated with the new thoughts. Think about how this experience relates to the competitive situation.
6. You may use the following chart to organize the activity.

What negative thoughts run through your mind before a performance in which you are anxious you might not do well?	What words might you use to stop these	Write down positive thoughts to replace the negative thoughts.

What negative thoughts run through your mind when you are experiencing difficulties during sport performance?	What words might you use to stop these	Write down positive thoughts to replace the negative thoughts.

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1 Leadership and professionalism

This principle considers the inherent power and authority that a coach holds.

Ethical standards of behaviour

- ▶ Understand the authority that comes with your position and make decisions that are in the best interest of all participants
- ▶ Share your knowledge and experience openly
- ▶ Maintain the athlete-centered approach to coaching so that every participant's well being is a priority
- ▶ Be a positive role model
- ▶ Maintain confidentiality and privacy of participants' personal information



2 Health and safety

This principle considers the mental, emotional, physical health and safety of all participants.

Ethical standards of behaviour

- ▶ Recognize and minimize vulnerable situations to ensure the safety of participants
- ▶ Prioritize a holistic approach when planning and delivering training and competition
- ▶ Advocate for, and ensure appropriate supervision of participants, including the Rule of Two
- ▶ Participate in education and training to stay current on practices to ensure the continued safety of your participants
- ▶ Understand the scope of your role and skills and call upon others with specialized skills when needed to support your participants



3 Respect and integrity

This principle considers respect and integrity, which are the rights of all participants.

Ethical standards of behaviour

- ▶ Provide equitable opportunity and access for all
- ▶ Establish a respectful and inclusive sport environment where all participants can raise questions or concerns
- ▶ Obey the rules and participate honestly and respectfully
- ▶ Be open, transparent and accountable for your actions
- ▶ Maintain objectivity when interacting with all participants



Rule of Two

The Rule of Two is a leading practice to ensure a safe sport environment for all. The goal of the Rule of Two is to ensure all interactions and communications are open, observable, and justifiable. The purpose is to protect participants and coaches. When following the Rule of Two, two responsible adults (a coach, parent, or screened volunteer) are present with a participant. There may be exceptions in emergency situations. Check with your sport organization as to how the Rule of Two is enforced.



Contact

Questions related to the NCCP Code of Ethics design may be directed to the Chief Operating Officer at the Coaching Association of Canada. Send an email to coach@coach.ca or call 613-235-5000 ext. 1.

For complaints related to Registered Coaches or Chartered Professional Coaches, refer to the Coaching Association of Canada's Code of Conduct.



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