Relaxation & Energizing Techniques
Part I

- Problems Athlete’s Face
- Signs that the athlete is having problems
- Arousal Defined
- Anxiety Defined
- Stress Defined
- Common research studies about arousal, anxiety, & stress
- Common assumptions about arousal, anxiety, & stress
Competition day problems in athletes

- Controlling one’s anxiety
- Timing of arousal performance readiness
- Worry
- Attentional focus
PROBLEMS AT THE COMPETITION SITE

- EQUIPMENT MALFUNCTION
- ARRIVING LATE
- HEALTH STATES
- CLIMATE
Problems Athletes Experience Prior to Competition

- Disruption of daily lifestyle routines
- Lack of familiarity with environment
- Social environment (crowd noise, etc)
Signs that indicate the athlete are having problems

- Cannot sleep
- Reduced attention (e.g., easily distracted by outside factors)
- Reduced skill level
- Uncertainty
- Cognitive errors
- Nonverbal cues (changes in behavior)
- Changes in performance expectation
- Overly concerned with doing well at a home game.
Why are controlling arousal and one’s anxiety important?

- Proper emotional states allow the athlete to perform to their potential
Arousal

- Arousal is a physiological process on a continuum ranging from sleep to high excitation (Duffy, 1957).

- Arousal is an emotional component that comprises both positive feelings (i.e., excitement, happiness) and negative feelings (i.e., fear, embarrassment).

- Arousal emotional components are psychological (cognitive) and physiological (somatic) based.

- Arousal has often been defined as the physiological intensity of behavior synonymous with drive, activation, readiness or excitation.
Anxiety

- Anxiety is a negative emotional state defined in terms of perceived threat.
- Anxiety has a thought component called cognitive anxiety.
- Anxiety has a physiological component called somatic anxiety.
State & Trait Anxiety

There are two types of anxiety: state and trait.

- State anxiety is transitory (fluctuates over time and situations)
- Competitive state anxiety is state anxiety mainly due to the athlete’s perception of the present or upcoming competition is perceived as threatening.
- Worry is the primary cognitive form of state anxiety.
- Moment to moment changes in one perceived physiological activation is somatic state anxiety (i.e., sweating, rapid heart rate, etc)

- Trait anxiety is part of our personality—relatively stable and predisposes an individual to perceive a wide range of situations as threatening or non threatening.
Stress

- Stress is process, a sequence of event that will lead to a particular end.

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- Two general sources of stress are: importance of the event and level of uncertainty about the outcome.
Common Research Studies about arousal, anxiety, and stress

- High ones level of life stress relates to higher incident of athletic injury.

- Highly self-regulated athlete seems to be able to control their arousal, anxiety, and stress levels.

- Level of state and trait anxiety differs across sports.

- Setting goals seems to help in controlling the anxiety levels in athletes.

- Experienced sport players level of anxiety is lower as compared to inexperienced sport players.

- Coaching leadership styles affects the athlete’s level of anxiety.
Common Research Studies about arousal, anxiety, and stress

- Experienced sport players level of anxiety is lower as compared to inexperienced sport players.

- Coaching leadership styles affects the athlete’s level of anxiety.

- Anxiety levels change across a competitive season, and from competition to competition.

- Athlete reports that controlling one’s anxiety level as a problem.
Common Assumption about arousal, anxiety, and stress

- High trait athletes tend to be more anxious and have higher state anxiety levels across competitive, threatening situations.

- Worry about performance and negative self-doubt interferes with one’s performance.

- When arousal is too high, athlete excludes too much information because their attention becomes narrow, inflexible or fixed.

- Inexperienced sport players or youth sport players are less able to control their anxiety level and are more apt to be overly aroused.

- Use of proper strategies and/or psychological interventions to cope with arousal, anxiety, and stress prevents choking under pressure.
End of Part I
Relaxation & Energizing Techniques
Part II: Arousal X Performance Relationships

- Drive Theory
- Inverted U Theory
- Hanins Zones of Optimal Functioning
- Multidimensional Anxiety Theory
- Catastrophe Model
- Reversal Theory
Assumption

- There is a relationship between the level of arousal and performance.

- Ways we explain this relationship is through the following models and theories.
  - Drive Theory
  - Inverted U Theory
  - Hanins Zones of Optimal Functioning
  - Multidimensional Anxiety
  - Catastrophe Model
  - Reversal Theory
Spence-Hull Drive theory indicated that performance is dependent on two factors: drive and habit strength.

Habit strength is the dominant correct responses occurs when drive is high, then better performance will occur.

Arousal level depends on the skill of the performer, skill to be performed, and or sport.

Some researchers feel that drive theory may explain performance in athlete’s who are highly skilled.

Many researchers have found little empirical evidence to support this theory.
Inverted U Theory

- Yerkes and Dodson Law assumes a curvilinear relationship exists between arousal and performance.

- The effect of arousal on performance is based on the optimal level given a particular skill or sport.

- Optimal means best performance.

- As arousal increases, so does performance up to the optimal point then beyond the optimal point performance declines.

- The athlete attempts to achieve the optimal point based on the performer’s stage of learning, skill to perform, and sport.
Hanins’ Zones of Optimal Functioning

- Athletes perform their best when they are in their optimal zone (emotions).

- Optimal level does not occur at one exact point but is a bandwidth or zone.

- As long as athlete is in their positive emotional zone they will perform optimally.

- As long as the athlete is in the above box or zone rather than a single point on the inverted U theory curve they will perform to their best.
Multidimensional Anxiety Theory

- Worry causes poor performance.

- Worry is a form of cognitive state anxiety.

- Any level of worry will negatively affect one's level of performance.

- Somatic levels of anxiety (physical signs such as sweating, etc) are related to performance in an inverted U fashion.

- When the athlete worries, worry or cognitive levels of anxiety will always negatively affect performance. So the above graph only applies to somatic anxiety not cognitive.
Catastrophe Model

- Worry causes poor performance.
- Worry is form of cognitive state anxiety.
- Any level of worry will negatively affect one’s level of performance.
- Somatic level of anxiety (physical signs such as sweating, etc) is related to performance in an inverted U relationship.

Above is what how worry affects one performance in a catastrophe way. Once we worry performance drops drastically.
Reversal Theory

- How arousal affects performance depends on the athlete’s interpretation of his or her arousal level.
- Athlete’s make quick reversal shifts when they interpret their level of arousal when it is too high or too low.
- When an individual interpret their arousal level as positive then little worry occurs.
- When an individual interpret their arousal level as negative then worry occurs.
End of Part II
Relaxation & Energizing Techniques
Mental Control

- Should be Automatic (Green & Green, 1977)
- Trick is to learn how to self-regulate:
  1. Arousal
  2. Relaxation
Learning to relax is essential to regulating arousal!

1. Prevents the double pulling

2. Promotes differential relaxation
Excessive Muscular Tension

- More the muscle tension (double pulling), more difficult it is to execute or perform.

- Athlete’s need to recognize unwanted tension and to relax or release tension (differential relaxation)
Excessive Muscular Tension

- Excessive muscular tension is triggered by mental input which is generated by worry and anxiety about performing well!
Being Relaxed can:

1. Promote proper coordination
2. Promote recovery
3. Promote sleep
4. Enhance performance
Locus of Control

- Athletes with an internal locus of control and have a positive expectancy are able to master relaxation techniques (Lehrer & Woolfolk, 1993)
What should coaches do?

- Coaches need to match the stress management technique with the symptoms of anxiety complaints by their athlete (Matching Hypothesis).

1. Somatic complaints

2. Cognitive complaints
Stress Management Techniques

Muscle to Mind Technique (somatic)

- Progressive relaxation
- Biofeedback

Mind to Muscle Technique (cognitive)

- Autogenic Training
- Mediation
- Relaxation Response (Benson, 1975)
- Imagery
Muscle to Mind Relaxation

1. Proper breathing (centering)
2. Progressive relaxation
   a. specific muscle groups
   b. relaxation tapes
   c. large muscle groups to small
   d. position
3. Biofeedback
Mind to Muscle Relaxation

1. Mediation
   a. Mantra
   b. Relaxation Response (Benson, 1975)

2. Visualization
   a. autogenic training (self hypnosis)
   b. stages
      - heavy
      - warm
      - 3 to 6 cycles
On Site Competition Relaxation Tips (Weinberg, 1988)

- Smile
- Have fun & enjoy
- Practices should simulate the contest
- Slow down and take your time
- Stay focused on the present
- Have a good game plan
Most Coaches Are Interested In Psyching Up Techniques

- Coach needs to assess the athlete(s) feelings and attitudes
- Signals that they are under activated.
  - do they seem to move slowly
  - does their mind seem to somewhere else
  - do they feel heavy
  - do they react slowly
Coaches Ways to Increase Arousal!

- Coach should not get excited before a contest! (Anxiety producing effect)
- Use first names
- Set on the site goals
- Use nonverbal cues
- Introduce the starting warm up
- Do a proper physical warm up
Athlete’s Ways to Increase Arousal

- Music
- Have a pre competition or competition routine
- Act energized (become physically involved)
- Use mood words, positive statements
- Use Imagery
- People (foe, other athletes, opponents, parents, etc.)
- Importance of the event
- Use distractions as a source of arousal
Incorrect Ways of Arousal Regulation that Produces Worry and Anxiety

- Teaching before and during the contest.
- Stress winning and losing
- Use criticism and threaten the athlete!
- Make the athlete feel guilt….
- Say…Don’t do that…
- Tell the athlete that they do not have what it takes!
- Blame the official
The END