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WINNING THOUGHTS: SELF-TALKINSPORT

QUOTABLEQUOTES

“You have to block everything out and be extremely focused, and BE RELAXED and mellow, too.” — JenniferCAPRIATI
“Channel your energy. FOCUS.” — CarlLEWIS

TIMEOUT!FORREFLECTION



Athletes and coaches desire to achieve that optimal energy experience (“the zone”) which so often leads to an optimal performance. A key feature to this energy-filled experience that makes competition enjoyable is the sharpness of your concentration, a mental skill. Your ability to sustain your focus (concentration) in your sport is a critical skill for your success.

QUESTIONSFORYOU

1. What are some common situations that cause you to lose concentration or confidence during competition?
2. Describe an experience when you lost focus, choked, or panicked?

Experts call this the “mental game” (the psychological component) which involves managing your inner thoughts and improving your mental outlook. An ancient proverb says, “As a man thinks within himself so he is.” Translation: *You are what you think!* In sports, your thinking is either positive or negative. Every play, drill, and situation is evaluated and influenced by your perspective (thoughts, feelings, etc.). Your self-talk is the internal dialogue you utter as you compete (see the athlete and her self-talk call-out below). For most in sports and life, their self-talk is riddled with negative thoughts—70-80% in any given day—which can affect their self-image, confidence, stress-levels, relationships, performance and motivation. What can you do? A helpful strategy for freeing you from these negative thought patterns and distractions is to **S.T.O.P.!**

S.T.O.P.!!NEGATIVESELF-TALK

Try the following exercise on a 3 X 5 card for 15-30 minutes after practice or a game.

1. **S**creen it: What situation or event triggered my negative thoughts? Describe the situation (i.e. missed an easy lay-up, etc.)
2. **T**arget it: What am I believing and saying about myself in my interpretation of the above event? What emotions and actions accompanied my thoughts? List your actual belief statements (see call-out box at left for examples). Describe how you responded (feelings and behavior related to anger, worry, anxiety, fear, guilt, confusion, embarrassment, disappointment; i.e. Did you curse, yell, pout, etc.?)
3. **O**wn it: Where did I get this idea about myself? What is the source of this thought-pattern? Take an honest inventory of how you ever came to believe this about yourself (parents, bad experiences, coaches, friends, peers, teammates, etc.).
4. **P**lace it: Are you willing to place this negative thought in the trash where all other “stinkin’ thinkin’” belongs?



NEGATIVESELF-TALK

I am an idiot!
We stink! No good!
It’s the ref’s/ump’s fault.
Crappy conditions.
If only I could have...
I can’t. You quitter!
I will never recover.
My shot’s awful!
I guess it doesn’t matter anyway.



RESOURCES >> Applying Sport Psychology. Jim Taylor and Gregory Wilson, (ed.). Coaching for the Inner Edge. Robin S. Vealey. Competitive Fire: Insights to Developing the Warrior Mentality of Sports Champions. Michael Clarkson. Real Joy: Freedom to Be Your Best. John Ashley Null. Peak Performance Training: www.performance-media.com © 2006 by JohnWhite