

Unit 4 SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

Task 1

Study the techniques for stress reduction. Which of them are physical, which are mental? How are they used? Match them with their descriptions below.

Imagery in Relaxation

Progressive Muscular Relaxation

Breathing Control

Biofeedback

Thought Awareness, Rational Thinking and Positive Thinking

- A) The idea behind this is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tight and contracted as possible, and hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then relax the muscles to their previous state. Finally you consciously relax them again as much as you can.
- B) To use the technique, observe your “stream of consciousness” as you think about the upcoming event. Do not suppress any thoughts. Instead, just let them run their course while you make note of them. As you notice negative thoughts, write them down and then let them go. The next step in dealing with negative thinking is to challenge the negative thoughts that you wrote down. Look at every thought you wrote down and rationally challenge it.
- C) One common use of this method is to imagine a scene, place or event that you remember as peaceful, restful, beautiful and happy. You can bring all your senses into the image, with sounds of running water and birds, the smell of cut grass, the taste of cool white wine, the warmth of sun, etc. Use the imagined place as a retreat from places of stress and pressure.
- D) These systems use electronic sensors to measure stress, and then feed the results of this measurement back to the athlete. They allow you to experiment with stress management techniques, and actually see or hear them taking effect on your body. Also, they allow you to practice different ways of using the techniques and compare the results. These methods convert vague feelings into hard, observable information, and help an athlete to fine-tune the use of stress management techniques.
- E) This is a very effective method of relaxation, which is a core component of everything from the 'take ten deep breaths' approach to calming someone down, right through to yoga relaxation and zen meditation.

(adapted from: <http://www.mindtools.com/stresstq.html>)

Which of the techniques described above do you consider effective? Have you tried any of them? What other mental techniques do you know?

Task 2 Video

Inside the mind of champion athletes

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yG7v4y_xwzQ)

I. Watch the video and complete the gaps in summarising sentences with one word:

1. Usain Bolt and Michael Phelps have contrasting _____, but both of them seem to be very _____.
2. Sports psychology may play a part in their _____.
3. Brazil were the _____ favourites.
4. The match between Brazil and Mexico was incredibly _____ to watch.
5. Sports psychology could explain why underdogs can win despite all the _____.
6. Sports psychology may also help when _____ a devastating defeat.

(0:00 - 3:30)

II. Watch and answer the questions below: (4:45 – the end)

What is sports psychology? What does it deal with?

What factors are linked to success in sport?

What are some of the successful athletes' strategies?

Task 3 Reading – Flow

1 Flow as defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) is the psychological state that accompanies highly engaging activities. Csikszentmihalyi became intrigued by flow when studying highly creative painters. When these artists were working on a painting and their work was going well, they were oblivious to hunger, fatigue, and discomfort. Csikszentmihalyi was struck by the **intrinsic motivation** that was behind the product. Painters did not paint with the external product in mind and certainly not with the thought of any extrinsic reward when they were done.

2 During flow, time passes quickly for the engaged individual. Attention is focused on the activity itself. The sense of the self as a social actor is lost. The aftermath of the flow experience is invigorating. Flow is not to be confused with sensual pleasure. Indeed, flow in the moment is non-emotional and nonconscious.

3 Here is a description by professional basketball player Ben Gordon of the Chicago Bulls of how it feels to be “in the zone” while playing:

“You lose track of the time, what quarter it is. You don’t hear the crowd. You don’t know how many points you have. You don’t think. You’re just playing. Everything is instinctive. When the feeling starts going away, it’s terrible. I talk to myself and say, ‘C’mon, you gotta be more aggressive. That’s when you know it’s gone. It’s not instinctive anymore.” (Peterson, 2006, s. 66).

4 From numerous studies, psychologists have learned that flow is most likely to occur when there is an optimal balance between skill and challenge. In other words, flow represents the coming together of a person and an environment. The good news is that one doesn’t need to be an expert in a domain to experience flow. All that matters is that the presented challenge meets one’s skills, and vice versa. Too much challenge disrupts the process, as does too little skill. The bad news is that the challenge of the flow activity necessarily changes as one’s skills improve. All of us know how initially engaging activities eventually lose their magic unless the bar is raised to meet our changes in expertise.

5 Flow can be experienced in all sorts of activities, at work or play, but usually among those activities perceived as voluntary. For example, homework for most schoolchildren strikes a balance between challenge and skill, but because homework is perceived as coerced, it rarely produces the flow state.

6 Thus, we have a paradox unanswered to date by research: Why do people so infrequently engage in the activities that they know will produce flow? One possible answer is provided by another experience that all of us know – so-called junk flow – with video games, TV shows or gossip as prime examples.

(adapted from Peterson, C. (2006). A Primer in Positive Psychology. OUP.)

After you read

How would you characterise “flow”?

When can we experience it?

How can we create environments in which athletes will experience it?

Find synonyms in the text:

- a) very interested in sth., wanting to know more (1)
- b) not aware of (1)
- c) the situation that exists as a result of sth. (2)
- d) making sb. feel full of energy (2)
- e) an area of knowledge (4)
- f) forced (5)
- g) things that are considered useless or of little value (6)

Task 4 Complete the gaps in the introduction. Then discuss the tips.

How to get your students motivated in PE (and beyond)

Getting and keeping kids motivated in school is hard work. As a physical education teacher, it can feel nearly (possible). Some kids are (athlete), while others don't like playing sports; others prefer (compete) contact activities or are (comfortable) getting physical. As a PE teacher, you can offer prizes and trophies to students for completing activities, but these external (motivate) will quickly lose their appeal and you'll be left trying to find more rewards just to keep your students (interest).

The key to getting and keeping your students motivated in PE is by (develop) their **intrinsic motivation**. Intrinsic motivation is the (please) students get from engaging in or completing an activity. To help get you started, we have put together four strategies to build your students' intrinsic motivation. While the below tips are (intend) for PE teachers, they are applicable for all subjects and can (easy) be altered to develop students' intrinsic motivation in math, science, and beyond.

1. **Develop activities that build on students' interests**

The first step is getting to know your students. You don't always need to *rely* on competitive team sports in your PE instruction. If students like to dance, design a step or cultural-dancing unit. If you want to develop their collaboration skills in the process, work in team building exercises through partner and group dancing.

2. **Increase opportunities for self-directed learning**

Let students take *ownership* of their learning by allowing them to choose their *personal* goals (e.g., 4 sets of 25 push-ups vs. 100 at once), and offer options of how students can demonstrate knowledge of a task or *acquisition* of a skill.

3. **Use task progressions**

Before diving into complex tasks, which will likely intimidate and *discourage* some of your students, start with simple forms of a skill, so students can build self-efficacy and *ability* in a non-judgmental way. For example, when introducing students to softball, teach them the fundamentals of throwing and catching, swinging a bat and running the bases before engaging them in a game.

4. **Set up activities that promote success**

Don't set your students up for *failure* by creating *unattainable* goals like running a six-minute mile. Instead, provide activities that they can accomplish with hard work. Ask an *athletically* gifted student to model the task so students know it is possible. Then, modify the requirements of the activity based on students' strengths and *weaknesses*. When students succeed in an appropriately challenging task they will be proud of their performance, which can lead to more interest and a *willingness* to take on more challenging work.

<https://www.advancementcourses.com/blog/how-to-get-your-students-motivated>

After you read:

Study the expressions in bold in the text above. What parts of speech are they?