

Newsletter: November 2001

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The next in the series of Sportsmind coaching handouts on now available from the website.

1 Developing Mental Toughness

The Secret of a Positive Mental Attitude

An untrained mind cannot accomplish anything of significant worth or extended effort - and this is particularly true in sport. 'Trained' in this Sportsmind sense has nothing to do with your level of education, or how 'intelligent' you are; rather, it's all about your ability to be positive; to know what to focus on and pay attention to at any point in time, and the ability to maintain that concentration in the face of external pressures.

What I call mental toughness.

Sportspeople who don't develop this essential mental toughness underachieve. In order to unlock your full physical potential, you will want to learn and master this essential skill - and it is a learnable and teachable skill.

For many years it was considered that such mental toughness was inherent; you either had 'it' or you didn't have 'it' - and some coaches and athletes still consider this to be so. However, the advent of the science of Neuro-Linguistic Programming has clearly proven that all behaviours - including mental toughness - are a result of cognitive processes; thinking strategies that can be taught and learned.

Sport is an exercise in controlling the body to perform particular movements and skills, and so most average sportspeople try to control their body. However, all control begins with the thoughts you hold in your mind.

Your thoughts control your self image and your self esteem; and how you see and feel about yourself affects how you perform. Thoughts are powerful - thoughts are the basic units of existence and subjective experience. Thoughts are the building blocks from which beliefs and attitudes are established. Few people recognise the true power of their thoughts and no one consistently maintains and uses that awareness throughout the day. Awareness of, and understanding the enormous power of, your own thoughts then is crucial to building a positive mental attitude - and consequently the self confidence essential to performing well in sport.

Often I hear coaches and parents encouraging (or admonishing) their charges to 'be more positive', or 'concentrate more', or 'be more motivated'. However these statements aren't helpful are they? If you're feeling unmotivated or a bit negative about yourself or your performance, does someone saying these things to you ever help?

What coaches and parents, (and athletes), want to understand is that simply stating a desired outcome or end-goal, offers no help in and of itself. Of course the person themselves knows they want to be more motivated, or positive, or focused - the trouble is they don't know how, otherwise they would already be doing it, wouldn't they? So what is needed is a process instruction on how to be more positive, or confident, or motivated, or whatever.

A process instruction is like a recipe - follow the instructions and you will get the desired end result, whether that's a fruit cake, spaghetti sauce, or a positive mental attitude.

So let's consider mental toughness and a positive attitude from this perspective. What is the process of being positive? What is the process of having mental toughness?

Steve Andreas and Charles Faulkner in NLP The New Technology of Achievement suggest that there are six 'ingredients' for the positive mental attitude recipe. I've outlined these below, and added some further ideas of my own that will help to refine your understanding of how to develop mental toughness.

1. Inner Motivation
2. High Standards
3. Self-to-self Comparisons
4. Chunked Down Goals

5. Linking Present and Future
6. Personal Involvement

Andreas and Faulkner believe the above six elements are not only important in and of themselves, but it is their simultaneous, integrated action that essentially creates a positive mental attitude.

Inner motivation is having very clear, internal reasons for 'why' you want something. The most effective motivations involve imagining a comparison of vivid, undesirable consequences of not achieving something, alongside the clear benefits that the achievement of the goal will bring.

Exercise Do this yourself, now. Think of something you want to be more motivated about - it could be anything: tidying your office; working out at the gym this afternoon; eating a more healthful diet; or reaching an elite level in your sport. Write down five negative consequences of not doing it, and five positive benefits of doing it. Now spend 30 seconds on each, vividly picturing the five consequences and the five benefits in detail. When you do this, fully associate to each of the pictures - see, hear, and feel them in detail.

The next two ingredients are to set a high standard for yourself, from wherever you are, and to measure your progress by self-to-self comparisons.

One of the reasons why people don't set a high standard for themselves is the belief in 'failure' - and this grows from self-to-other comparisons. If I attempt to learn the piano, and after my first couple of lessons compare myself to someone who has been playing for years, it's easy to get discouraged, and feel inferior. Since people don't like to feel inferior, the 'solution' they come up with is to not set a high goal, believing that since they don't have a goal, then they can't fail and therefore feel bad!

The trouble with this kind of logic is that you get to feel good about your self only when you follow through - when you say you're going to do something, and you do it. Do people who happen upon something nice by luck, or chance, actually feel good about themselves? No. They feel good about the nice thing happening, but the feeling is divorced from them; it was luck, it could have happened to anyone.

The other problem with not setting a high standard for yourself, is that you're really saying, "I'm afraid of failing". In other words, you believe that to make a mistake, to 'fail', is bad - rather than recognising that there really is no failure, only feedback and learning. When we speak to a young child learning to swim, or ride a bicycle for the first time, and they get discouraged because they can't do it straight away, do we say to them "Well, since you've failed, I think you should give up."?

However, do you do that for yourself? Do you recognise what you have learned from each apparent stumble, or less than best performance? Have you lowered your standard because of fear of failure?

Exercise Think of something in your life that you've 'given up' on - maybe you started to play a musical instrument as a young child, but never continued; maybe you started to learn a foreign language; maybe you thought of being a professional sportsperson, or starting your own business but at some point you gave it up. Reflect for a few minutes on how you did that? Perhaps it was simply the right step for you at the time. Or maybe there was some fear of failure there that if you had faced, might have allowed you to proceed further. Is there somewhere in your life right now that you experience a hesitancy, behind which lies a fear of failure? What would happen if you challenged that?

As I noted, the belief in failure is often deeply rooted in self-to-other comparisons, however someone can still experience this belief in self-to-self comparisons: eg. "Even after ten lessons, I'm still slicing the ball!" So the next step is to have a 'chunking down' process, which break ups large goals and high standards into bite-sized pieces. The objective here is to have the chunk size small enough to have positive successes along the way, so the self-to-self comparisons are leading to experiences of positive satisfaction.

Obviously, this chunk size will be different for different people, and one of the goals of a coach is to recognise each person's existing skill level and to present new material in a way that engenders this positive, step wise progression of continual improvement.

Exercise Think of a desired goal. Take ten minutes writing down the major steps involved in your successfully attaining that goal.

The fifth ingredient in our mental toughness recipe involves how an individual orients and uses different time frames. Successful athletes concentrate on the present moment when engaged in 'small chunk' activities (such as playing a match); yet also have the ability to vividly picture and positively associate to strongly desired, long term 'large chunk' goals in the future.

The key lies in knowing when to do which: present moment focus is for playing; future focus is for planning. A positive attitude combines both : at the same time as being able to focus on the immediate task at hand, there is a motivating image of a strongly desired future in the distance. Successful sportspeople can switch their focus of attention back and forth between these two different time frames quickly and distinctly.

Exercise Think of a time you performed very well. Remember that experience, associate yourself back to it, and notice your thoughts and focus of attention at that time. Were you thinking about the past, present, or future? Now think of a

time you performed poorly. Again, remember the experience, associate yourself back to it, and notice your thoughts and focus of attention at that time: were they about the past, present, or future?

The sixth ingredient is personal involvement and commitment. Without active participation in your own journey of success, there is no positive attitude. It's like being out injured while you watch your teammates win the grand final. You're pleased about the result, but it's easy to feel apart from it, because you weren't playing.

Of course this means taking responsibility for your own training program, your own education, your own health and recovery from injury, and so on. It's easy with today's advances in sports medicine to depend too much on 'expert' opinions - passively acquiescing to what the coach, or doctor, or psychologist, or other expert says without finding out what we can also do to help ourselves.

Of course, this doesn't mean we question or challenge everything the coach or doctor says - neither rebellious resistance nor passive acquiescence is the proper path to high achievement and personal excellence! Rather, we always look to what we can do ourselves, as well as utilising the expertise of other talented people.

Exercise Identify something that you want - it may be to recover from an injury; or to overcome a limiting behaviour; or learn a specific skill; whatever. What could you do, by yourself, towards attaining that?

Finally, the most important ingredient in our recipe of mental toughness is asking the right questions. One of the predominant processes of our thinking that is particularly evident when we are experiencing any kind of personal limitation, is that of questioning.

How often have you heard people ask themselves questions such as : Why am I so fat? What's wrong with me? What can't I get a job that I like? How come we can never save money? Why aren't I successful? Why is it so difficult? What's the problem with me? Why can't I get motivated?

All of which I call wh(y)ning questions - because they don't lead anywhere useful, do they? Even if you get an accurate answer, to any of the above, it doesn't usually help very much.

It's more useful to ask yourself questions of possibility and action - questions designed to be more useful and take you where you want to go. 'How' questions.

For example: How can I lose some weight? What enjoyable exercise activity could I do 3 or 4 times a week? What do I really enjoy doing that I could develop into a new career? How can we save \$20 every week? What could I do to earn

an extra \$200 a month? How can I be more successful? What is the solution here? How can I get motivated?

These questions are much more self empowering because they direct your attention to possible solutions and positive action, rather than focusing on the problem. Of course, it's also important to identify what is controllable by you in the context. Many people beat themselves up trying to solve difficulties instead of problems. Difficulties are external challenges over which we have little or no control; problems are issues over which we do have a level of control.

Interestingly, advances in performance are often made by someone reframing a perceived difficulty as a problem: something that the general consensus suggests is 'impossible', yet which the individual finds a way to see as a solvable problem. The movies Apollo 13 and Rudy provide some wonderful examples of the process of mental toughness in action.

Exercise Think of some current 'problem' or limitation you're currently experiencing. Identify the questions you typically ask yourself about this. Think of some alternative questions that would be more useful and direct your attention towards a solution or improvement.

Let me conclude with the personal story of the cyclist Greg LeMond to show you how mental toughness works in action. Greg LeMond won the Tour de France in 1989, and shortly afterwards was shot in the chest and leg in a hunting accident which left several shotgun pellets around his heart - since it was too dangerous to attempt to remove them.

Over the next two years, he not only rehabilitated, but set the goal to win another Tour. How did he do it? He took ownership of his own recovery; he had a high standard set for himself - he didn't just want to recover, he wanted to be better than he was; he had an inner motivation and a strongly desired future goal that he chunked down to small steps; he only made self-to-self comparisons (despite media commentators talking disparagingly of his 'pipe dreams' and coming public humiliation); and of course he asked himself the right questions. The end result?

As he completed the final leg of the race down famous the Champs-Elysees, he recorded the fastest time in the history of the Tour de France - with shotgun pellets still around his heart!

2 Sportsmind Network News

2001 has been an extremely busy year for the Sportsmind network, with eight new coaches joining our ranks - four from the UK! It's also been extremely satisfying teaching programs for the Australian PGA again this year, and

conducting the first Mental Mastery workshops in London. I've also returned to further study myself, working my way through a Bachelor of Education in Adult Education & Training through the University of New England.

Major highlights of the year have been :

- * Champion Thoughts, Champion Feelings, Teaching Excellence and Core of Confidence courses for Qld University in Semester 1.
- * Champion Thoughts, Champion Feelings course for Sunshine Coast TAFE college in March.
- * Motivation and Goals and Visualisation workshops for both Ashley Pitman's golfers and Max Bates' tennis students at Kelvin Grove School of Sports Excellence.
- * Design Your Life programs for Telstra in May and June.
- * Again invited to present at the Filex convention in June.
- * Consulted for Shelley Oates and her crew prior to their successful outrigger victories in the National titles and Hamilton Island cup.
- * Motivation and Goals workshop for Cats Cycle Club in June.
- * Seven Skills of the Sportsmind talk for Waratah Golf Club in July.
- * Motivation and Goals workshop for Alwyn Barrett's swimmers at Firbank Grammar School in August.
- * Rapport Skills and Core of Confidence programs for the PGA in Perth, Hobart, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in July/August.
- * Motivation and Goals workshops for Personal Training students at Sunshine Coast TAFE college in August.
- * Mental Mastery trainings in London and on Gold Coast in September.
- * Sports Hypnosis program in October.
- * Core of Confidence and Design Your Life courses for Qld University in Semester 2.
- * Relax and Imagine workshop for Network conference in November.

I've also been really pleased with the growth of the work at the Runaway Bay Sports Super Centre, particularly linking up with Brendon Downey who is an exercise physiologist. Check out his website at www.brendondowney.com.au for some great physical training tips and techniques. I'm now working with a number of top young golfers and tennis players who I believe will be up among the best in the world in the next few years!

On the personal front it's been pleasing to further cement my own training in Aikido over the past year (I managed to get to training 2 - 3 times per week for most of the year despite the busy schedule), and introduced my seven year old son to his first class in June! Don't you wish you had started at that age?

3 Sportsmind Courses & Scholarships for 2002

2002 is going to be the best year yet for Sportsmind, with the inaugural Sportsmind Coaches conference, and plans for more courses in the UK and Europe, as well as Australia, and the expansion of the Sportsmind network into Canada through a link with Dave Grace, owner and operator of Olympia Sports Camps - one of the largest facilities in North America!

Also, this year we want to organise a superb Coaching Excellence conference with key speakers from overseas as well as the best in Australia in Sports NLP techniques. Stay tuned for more details on this early in 2002, but at this stage the likely dates are October 10th - 12th in Melbourne.

If you're serious about improving your sporting or coaching abilities, consider the Sportsmind Mental Mastery and Coaching Excellence courses. Courses are scheduled for January and March at the Sports Super Centre on the Gold Coast - providing an unequalled opportunity to learn and train at Australia's newest and best sports facility. Some scholarship places are also offered for Mental Mastery workshops. Full details and an application form are enclosed. together with course details and the schedule for 2002.

Sportsmind Courses 2002

January: 2nd - 6th - Mental Mastery \$995.00

January: 7th - Physical Training Mastery (with Brendon Downey) \$ 95.00

January: 2nd - 9th - Coaching Excellence (inc. Mental Mastery) \$1,495.00

January: 10th - 12th - Sportsmind Coaches Conference \$195.00

Venue: Sports Super Centre, Gold Coast.

April: 23rd - 27th - Mental Mastery \$995.00

Venue: Sports Super Centre, Gold Coast.

June: 8th - 12th - Mental Mastery \$995.00

June: 17th - 18th - Mind Matters for Personal Trainers \$395.00

Venue: Sancta Sophia College, Sydney University.

September 20th - October 6th : Sports Hypnosis (combining NLP Australia's Ericksonian Hypnosis training) \$2,995.00

Venue: Byron Bay Surf Club, Byron Bay.

October 10th - 12th : International Coaching Excellence Conference

October 14th - 18th : Mental Mastery \$995.00

October 19th - 21st : Coaching Excellence (inc. Mental Mastery) \$1,495.00

Venue: To be confirmed, Melbourne

Course Details

1. Sportsmind Mental Mastery - five days full time

An essential skill-building workshop providing practical techniques to improve the seven key areas of mental training for peak athletic performance : Positive Self Motivation; Powerful Goal Achievement Strategies; Concentration & Focusing Techniques; Emotional State Mastery; Positive Mental Attitude; Confidence & Positive Self Concept; and Precision Visualisation Techniques. An optional extra day on Physical Training Mastery is also available on Jan 7th.

Sportsmind Coaching Excellence Course - eight days full time: Jan 2nd - 9th. A personal and professional development program for learning how to get the best out of others - individually, or as a team. It includes a specific skills building program designed to expand your range of communication and leadership abilities; learn powerful motivation and achievement strategies; engender positive emotional states in others; and initiate and manage positive behavioural change toward specific goals and targets. The program combines the five days of Mental Mastery with three days of advanced communication and leadership skills, for those who want to be more effective in coaching others to achieve success - professional coaches, teachers, managers, personal trainers, referees, and community leaders.

For Level 2 and level 3 accreditation, after completing either Mental Mastery or Coaching Excellence, interested coaches undertake NLP practitioner / Master Practitioner training with either NLP Australia (www.nlpaustralia.com.au) or Inspiritive (www.inspiritive.com.au). Full details are available on the Sportsmind website at www.sportsmind.com.au

[A list of Level 2 licencees is available online.](#) These Sportsmind graduates are licensed to provide sports NLP performance consulting. If you have any queries about Sportsmind programs, or want a Sports-NLP coaching session, please contact them

Future Direction

Over the next ten years our goal is to make Sportsmind the leading performance coaching and personal development provider for athletes in the world - and to establish a network of 1,000 Sportsmind accredited performance consultants who can provide assistance for top athletes, sports clubs and corporations - worldwide. The people involved will have a practicing sports background, have an interest in coaching, and be superb facilitators able to create learning environments which are challenging, enjoyable and directed at personal development.

How to Become Part of the Vision

To be part of this vision, you will complete a Sportsmind Coaching Excellence or NLP Practitioner course to attain Level 1 or 2 Sportsmind accreditation. You will then be granted a licence to practice in your area. If you're interested in establishing a career in sports performance coaching, please consider the opportunity involvement with Sportsmind provides.

THE SPORTSMIND MISSION STATEMENT

- To further the development of the Sportsmind Institute for Human Performance Research which will :
 - produce high quality Sports- NLP books and tapes;
 - promote Sportsmind training and Sports-NLP;
 - train and support Sports-NLP trainers;
 - research and disseminate new ideas and techniques;
 - maintain standards of a professional association.

- Sportsmind products and training courses will be widely sought after, acclaimed internationally, and have a positive effect on the lives of those they touch for their highest good. The Sportsmind training courses will generate an empowering atmosphere of learning, challenge and personal growth.
- The trainers involved with Sportsmind will have the utmost integrity and professionalism in their facilitation, and will continuously improve their own skills and knowledge through regular training, positive feedback and inspiration.
- Sportsmind will attract all the human and financial resources for manifesting the vision, and will be prosperous - providing financial and inspirational support for those involved, and for other healing projects of worth in the wider community. Sportsmind will continue to evolve and grow.

For more details about Sportsmind contact Jeffrey Hodges:

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COACHING HANDOUT #4: SPORTSMIND PERFORMANCE DE-BRIEF

By Jeffrey Hodges M.Sc.(Hons), Sportsmind Institute

Use the following de-briefing process to evaluate a performance and set improvement targets.

Date Event

1. Objective Measure (e.g. Won match; placed fourth; scored 12 points; took 4 wickets for 78; hit 86 off the stick; ran under three hours; etc.)
2. Subjective Measure (How you personally felt about the performance, regardless of outcome. Circle one.)

Excellent Good OK Below Average Poor

3. Performance Statistics (e.g. % first serves in court; slices/hooks on what holes; number of possessions; number of rebounds; etc.)

4. Comments / Observations of coach and others (family, friends, officials, etc.)

5. Do you agree with the above comments? If not, why not?

6. What aspects of your competition strategy worked well? What wants to be improved? Were there any unforeseen distractions or difficulties to allow for next time?

7. Were you satisfied with your preparation? What went well? What wants to be improved?

8. Did you follow your pre-competition routine? Was it effective? How can it be improved?

9. Map out a graph of your mood throughout the match. Note significant turning points and any self talk or images (positive or negative) you were aware of at the time.

10. List what actions to take at forthcoming training sessions.

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For more coaching handouts and resources call 07 5445 7994

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