

SUMMER 2018 NEWSLETTER



Top coaches not only teach X's and O's, but also devote enormous amount of time getting to know the whole athlete.

Upcoming Talks:



BlueStreak Sports Training: Sport Psychology Talks

August 28: The Well-Balanced Athlete.
Briarcliff High School

Late August:
Sport Psychology in Squash.
Apawamis Club

New England Somatic Experiencing Practitioners Conference

SE and the Treatment of Concussions

September 8, 2018

Unitarian Church

121 North Pleasant Street Amherst, MA



Peak Performance from the Inside Out

Trust, confidence, and being in the present moment express the sensations that we experience when we are 100% focused on a task without entertaining mechanical or distracting thoughts in our minds. When we are totally focused, we achieve our goals, become productive, and feel proud for having moved forward. If being totally focused is so positive, what prevents us from being in that positive mindset for longer time?

For some people, staying focused seems to come more naturally while for others it requires a greater amount of conscientious effort. Even for those fortunate individuals, their genetic "focused" gene pool barely counts enough to completely do away from needing positive life experiences and conscientiously putting effort to promote being in the present moment. By far, life experiences and effort much more so than genes are the primary source of wisdom to achieve a greater level of emotional regulation in stressful experiences, which in turn, promote focus and enhances performance.

The neuroscience behind focus

It's less about what we say and more about how it is understood



Two individuals having a pleasant social interaction not only leads to fun and laughter, but also, unbeknown to them,

SUMMER 2018 NEWSLETTER



Top coaches not only teach X's and O's, but also devote enormous amount of time getting to know the whole athlete.



**FOLLOW US
ON FACEBOOK**

Latest Sports Blog Posts

[Early specialization:
Something to think about
before committing](#)

[New England Somatic
Experiencing Practitioners
Conference](#)

[An unsolicited advice to
Garbiñe Muguruza – Part 2](#)

[2018 PyeongChang, South
Korea Winter Olympic
Games](#)

[Tenacity: A Chris Long
Story](#)

promotes self-regulation of emotions at a non-verbal language. While having a good time, their respective nervous systems are simultaneously “talking” with one another synchronizing emotions. The nervous system from person A is reading the smiley face from person B, which causes a calmer demeanor and, in turn, responds with another smile. The nervous system from person B reads A’s positive verbal and non-verbal cues, which promotes being in the present moment. On the other hand, if either person perceives a potential threat, which could be in the form of yelling, nagging, rolling one’s eyes or disengaging, the other person will immediately turn on his/her physiological fear alarm system, causing both to lose their positive social engagement. The human ability to expand on the capacity to be in the present moment is experience dependent, not genetic dependent. Hence, the quality of the human interaction between athlete and coach has a direct effect on enhancing peak performance.

The learning pyramid



Learning how to play a sport requires skill development. How to properly hold a racquet, hit drive shots, lobs, and serves need technical instructions. Eventually, those skills become a second thought and the athlete moves to the second phase of needing to learn the strategies of the game. Reading the breaks of a golf green increases the chances of making putts.

SUMMER 2018 NEWSLETTER



Top coaches not only teach X's and O's, but also devote enormous amount of time getting to know the whole athlete.

Don't think about the start of the race; think about the ending."
Usain Bolt

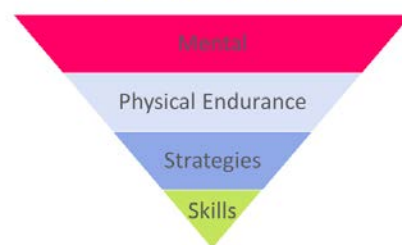


Learning how to talk with a soccer teammate helps to create passing opportunities to score. The third phase is physical development. Athletes require physical stamina, flexibility, and strength to sustain the demands of each sport. However, when the pressure is on, the pyramid flips upside down. It is the mind that takes over and becomes pivotal in helping athletes to remain focused and achieve the best possible results. Unless athletes either learned or were trained to use their mental capacity to regulate emotions, it means they are less likely to apply mental skills to promote a focused state of mind. Based on research, the main factor leading to peak performance in Olympic athletes is the coach-athlete relationship over optimal training environment. When looking at coaches' behavioral traits that promote peak performance, a 2005 survey found looking at the athlete as a whole person rather than primarily focusing on strategies and skills made the significant difference.

The inside out of peak performance

Achieving peak performance requires teaching athletes how to trust in themselves. When the pressure is on, athletes pay less attention on their skills and more on emotional regulation. Coaches can promote trust by positively supporting the learning process. When a mistake is made, coaches need to provide a corrective instruction in a positive and encouraging demeanor. Even when the athlete knows the drill and still makes a mistake, motivating rather than using a punishing tone of voice promotes focus rather than fear of making the same mistake again. When making positive progress, applaud the effort more so than the innate talent. Also, coaches should not take progress for granted. They need to continue encouraging and reinforcing mental focus. Help athletes to verbalize the skill they are using that promotes focus as it will be easier for them to recall their own words rather than the coach's. Maybe it is a positive cue that crosses

THE LEARNING PYRAMID



SUMMER 2018 NEWSLETTER



Top coaches not only teach X's and O's, but also devote enormous amount of time getting to know the whole athlete.

the athlete's mind or awareness to a relaxed breathing is what helps to stay focused. Whatever works better for the athlete, the easier will it be remembered and used when it really counts.

The more they "own" their sense of being able to regulate their emotions, the more likely they will tap on such an internal source of knowledge. Once athletes take ownership of their own ability to promote mental focus, the higher the likelihood that they will achieve their best results. When the game is on the line and athletes feel most pressure, their inner knowledge and language will prevail over the coaches' instructions. Once athletes learn to tap on their implicit source of emotional regulation, it is stored in the athletes' memory for life. Peak performance occurs as a result of having a developed inner sense of confidence and trust.



Alex Diaz, Ph.D.

Sports Mental Edge TM Sports Psychology Consultant Certified
Performing Edge Coaching Professional

WWW.SPORTSMENTALEDGE.COM

68 Main Street, Suite 340

Tuckahoe, NY 10707

(914) 793-9719