

UNIT I: INTRODUCTION: SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION TO SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

Sport and Exercise Psychology is the study of psychological and mental factors that influence, and are influenced by, participation in sport, exercise and physical activity, and the application of this knowledge to everyday settings. Exercise psychology and sport psychology involve the scientific study of the psychological factors that are associated with participation and performance in sport, exercise and other types of physical activity. Sport psychologists are interested in two main areas: (a) helping athletes use psychological principles to achieve optimal mental health and to improve performance (performance enhancement) and (b) understanding how participation in sport, exercise and physical activity affects an individual's psychological development, health and well-being throughout the lifespan.

APPLIED SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

Applied sport and exercise psychology consists of instructing athletes, coaches, teams, exercisers, parents, fitness professionals, groups, and other performers on the psychological aspects of their sport or activity. The goal of applied practice is to optimize performance and enjoyment through the use of psychological skills and the use of psychometrics and psychological assessment.

Applied sport psychology is the study and application of psychological principles of human performance in helping athletes consistently perform in the upper range of their capabilities and more thoroughly enjoy the sport performance process. Applied sport psychologists are uniquely trained and specialized to engage in a broad range of activities including the identification, development and execution of the mental and emotional knowledge, skills and abilities required for excellence in athletic domains; the understanding, diagnosing and preventing of the psychological, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and psychophysiological inhibitors of consistent, excellent performance; and the improvement of athletic contexts to facilitate more efficient development, consistent execution and positive experiences in athletes.

WHO ARE SPORTS AND EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGISTS?

Sports psychologists investigate how participating in sports can improve health and well being. They also help athletes utilize psychology to improve their sports performance and mental well-being.

Sport and Exercise Psychologists are interested in how sport, exercise, and physical activity can enhance performance, health, and enjoyment in certain activities. The key focus is

on the development of mental skills -the ability for individuals to understand and use their minds to improve their performances and enjoyment.

Sports psychologists typically perform a range of tasks related to sports performance and education. Some opt to teach at the university level, while others work directly with athletes to increase motivation and enhance performance. Other options include client counseling, scientific research and athletic consulting. In addition to working with professional athletes, sports psychologists also utilize their expertise to increase the mental well-being of non-athletes. They may work with a range of non-professional clients, including children and teens involved in athletics and injured athletes working toward returning to competition.

Generally, there are two different types of sport psychologists: educational and clinical.

Educational sport psychologists emphasize the use of psychological skills training (e.g., goal setting, imagery, energy management, self-talk) when working with clients by educating and instructing them on how to use these skills effectively during performance situations. The common goal of an educational sport psychologist is performance enhancement by teaching skills to athletes on how to manage the mental factors of sports to maximize potential.

Clinical sports psychologists obtain a doctoral degree in clinical or counseling psychology. They meet with athletes that have mental health issues and work to provide the mental health solutions they need both individually and in group settings. Areas of expertise include mainly clinical issues, which include but are not limited to depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse. They are able to prescribe medications or other forms of treatment to address clinical issues. A non-clinical sport psychologist might refer one of their clients to a clinical psychologist if it is thought that the athlete might need additional help regarding their mental health.

THREE ORIENTATIONS OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGISTS

PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGICAL ORIENTATION - An approach to the study of sport psychology that focuses on the relationship between mental activities and physiological processes (e.g. heart rate and muscle action potentials), and their effects on physical activity. Examines underlying psychophysiological processes of the brain in terms of primary causes of behavior. • Example: Biofeedback to trained marksmen

SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATION • Behavior is determined by a complex interaction of the social environment and the personal makeup of the athlete or exerciser. • Example: How a leader's style and strategies foster group cohesion

COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL ORIENTATION • Behavior is determined by both the environment and thoughts (cognitions). • Example: Studying differences in confidence and anxiety among tennis players with or without burnout

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Entry-level positions with a bachelor's degree are rare, usually taking the form of internships. Most positions require a master's or doctorate degree in clinical, counseling or sports psychology as well as direct training and experience in applying psychology to sports and exercise. The American Board of Sport Psychology offers a professional certification for licensed psychologists who want to pursue this specialty. This board certification signifies that the holder has advanced training and experience in sport psychology and is especially aware of ethical, methodological, and research issues associated with the application of methods to enhance the psychological performance of athletes. In order to pursue this certification, applicants must have a doctorate degree and a license to practice in at least one state. Division 47 of the APA suggests that sports psychologists should be licensed psychologists with "experience in applying psychological principles in sports settings"

CAREER IN SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

Sports psychologists may also choose to specialize in a particular area. Some examples of major specialties within this field include: Applied sports psychology focuses on teaching skills to enhance athletic performance such as goal setting and imagery. Clinical sports psychology involves combining mental training strategies from sports psychology with psychotherapy to help clients who are experiencing mental health problems including eating disorders and depression. Academic sports psychologists teach at colleges and universities and also conduct research.

USES OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

^ Sport and Exercise Psychology can benefit anyone who wishes to improve performance or stay healthy in their chosen activities; clients include:

- Recreational, elite, and professional athletes (e.g. tennis players, runners, rock climbers)
- Professional, representative, and club sporting teams (e.g. rugby, soccer, netball, basketball)
- Performing artists (e.g. dancers, musicians, actors)
- Coaches, umpires, and referees
- Managers, decisions makers, and administrators in white collar roles
- Employees and employers in any other occupations concerned with optimal performance

HISTORY OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

Sports psychology is a relatively young discipline in psychology. The first research labs devoted to the topic were opened during the 1920s and 1930s. After the first U.S. lab was closed during the early 1930s, research did not resume until the topic experienced a revival of interest during the 1960s.

The birth of sport psychology in Europe happened largely in Germany. The first sport psychology laboratory was founded by Dr. Carl Diem in Berlin, in the early 1920s. The early years of sport psychology were also highlighted by the formation of the Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen (College of Physical Education) in Berlin Germany by Robert Werner Schulte in 1920. The lab measured physical abilities and aptitude in sport, and in 1921, Schulte published *Body and Mind in Sport*. In Russia, sport psychology experiments began as early as 1925 at institutes of physical culture in Moscow and Leningrad, and formal sport psychology departments were formed around 1930.

In North America, early years of sport psychology included isolated studies of motor behavior, social facilitation, and habit formation. During the 1890s, E. W. Scripture conducted a range of behavioral experiments, including measuring the reaction time of runners, thought time in school children, and the accuracy of an orchestra conductor's baton. Despite Scripture's previous experiments, the first recognized sport psychology study was carried out by an American psychologist Norman Triplett, in 1898. His work of Norman Triplett demonstrated that bicyclists were more likely to cycle faster with a pacemaker or a competitor, which has been foundational in the literature of social psychology and social facilitation.

Coleman Griffith: "America's first sport psychologist"

Coleman Griffith worked as an American professor of educational psychology at the University of Illinois where he first performed comprehensive research and applied sport psychology. He performed causal studies on vision and attention of basketball and soccer players, and was interested in their reaction times, muscular tension and relaxation, and mental awareness.[12] Griffith began his work in 1925 studying the psychology of sport at the University of Illinois funded by the Research in Athletics Laboratory. Until the laboratory's closing in 1932, he conducted research and practiced sport psychology in the field. The laboratory was used for the study of sport psychology; where different factors that influence athletic performance and the physiological and psychological requirements of sport competitions were investigated. He then transmitted his findings to coaches, and helped advance the knowledge of psychology and physiology on sports performance. Griffith also published two major works during this time: *The Psychology of Coaching* (1926) and *The Psychology of Athletics* (1928). Coleman Griffith was also the first person to describe the job of sport psychologists and talk about the main tasks that they should be capable of carrying out. He mentioned this in his work "Psychology and its relation to athletic competition", which was published in 1925.

In 1938, Griffith returned to the sporting world to serve as a sport psychologist consultant for the Chicago Cubs. Hired by Philip Wrigley for \$1,500, Griffith examined a range of factors such as: ability, personality, leadership, skill learning, and social psychological factors related to performance.

Coleman Griffith made numerous contributions to the field of sport psychology, but most notable was his belief that field studies (such as athlete and coach interviews) could provide a more thorough understanding of how psychological principles play out in competitive situations. Griffith devoted himself to rigorous research, and also published for both applied and academic audiences, noting that the applicability of sport psychology research

was equally important with the generation of knowledge. Finally, Griffith recognized that sport psychology promoted performance enhancement and personal growth.

In 1923, Griffith developed and taught the first sport psychology university courses ("Psychology and Athletics") at the University of Illinois, and he came to be known as "The Father of Sport Psychology" in the United States, as a result of his pioneering achievements in that area. However, he is also known as "The prophet without disciples", since none of his students continued with sport psychology, and his work started to receive attention only from the 1960s.

Renewed growth and emergence as a discipline

Given the relatively free travel of information amongst European practitioners, sport psychology flourished first in Europe, where in 1965, the First World Congress of Sport Psychology met in Rome, Italy. This meeting, attended by some 450 professionals primarily from Europe, Australia, and the Americas, gave rise to the International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP). The ISSP became a prominent sport psychology organization after the Third World Congress of Sport Psychology in 1973. Additionally, the European Federation of Sport Psychology was founded in 1968.

In North America, support for sport psychology grew out of physical education. The North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPSPA) grew from being an interest group to a full-fledged organization, whose mission included promoting the research and teaching of motor behavior and the psychology of sport and exercise. In Canada, the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology (SCAPPS) was founded in 1977 to promote the study and exchange of ideas in the fields of motor behavior and sport psychology.

In 1979, Rainer Martens published an article entitled "About Smocks and Jocks", in which he contended that it was difficult to apply specific laboratory research to sporting situations.

The first journal The Journal of Sport Psychology came out in 1979; and in 1985, several applied sport psychology practitioners, headed by John Silva, believed an organization was needed to focus on professional issues in sport psychology, and therefore formed the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP). This was done in response to NASPSPA voting not to address applied issues and to keep their focus on research.

In 2007, AAASP dropped "Advancement" from its name to become the Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), as it is currently known.

Following its stated goal of promoting the science and practice of applied sport psychology, AAASP quickly worked to develop uniform standards of practice, highlighted by the development of an ethical code for its members in the 1990s. The development of the AAASP Certified Consultant (CC-AAASP) program helped bring standardization to the training required to practice applied sport psychology. Moreover, in 2018 AASP updated its certification program and launched the Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC). AASP aims to provide leadership for the development of theory, research and applied practice in sport, exercise, and health psychology. Also during this same time period, over 500 members of the American Psychological Association (APA) signed a petition to create Division 47 in 1986, which is focused on Exercise and Sport Psychology.

Sport Psychology started to become visible at the Olympic games in 1984, when the Olympic teams began to hire sport psychologists for their athletes, and in 1985, when the U.S. team employed their first permanent sport psychologist. For the Summer Olympics in 1996, the U.S. already had over 20 sport psychologists working with their athletes.

More recently, the role of sport psychologist has been called on to meet the increasing demand for anger management for athletes. Increasingly, Sport Psychologists have needed to address this topic and provide strategies and interventions for overcoming excessive anger and aggression in athletes, and techniques for athletes to manage emotions. A comprehensive anger management program for athletes was developed by Dr. Mitch Abrams, a licensed sport psychologist who authored "Anger Management in Sport.

The International Society of Sport Psychology (ISSP) was established in 1965 and by the 1970s, sports psychology had been introduced to university course offerings throughout North America. By the 1980s, sports psychology became the subject of a more rigorous scientific focus as researchers began to explore how psychology could be used to improve athletic performance, as well as how exercise could be utilized to improve mental well-being and lower stress levels.

PERSONALITY AND SPORT

Personality itself can influence many aspects of sport performance and behaviour, some of which may well be out of the athlete's cognitive control. It is important to understand personality if dealing with athletes to promote the best coping strategies and goals to assist in improving their performance. Personality is the unique pattern of behaviour and characteristics a person/athlete displays. Some psychologists believe success or failure on the sports pitch is determined by personality. Personality is the 'psychological characteristics that make a person unique and account for regular patterns of behaviour'.

Hollander (1971) provided a model to show how personality is structured. The model has three layers:

1. The psychological core is innermost and this reflects the fairly permanent traits that an individual has. It includes their beliefs, values, attitudes and self-concept.
2. These traits determine how a person behaves and their typical responses. For example if they are shy and timid then they will act like this in most situations.
3. The outer layer is the role related behaviours. This is how we act in particular situations.

DEFINING PERSONALITY

Personality is difficult to define due to its complex nature; however one definition in the literature is 'the characterisation of individual differences'. The fact that everyone is different is extremely important when it comes to sport and coaching. It is considered that personality relates to the specific traits a person displays. A trait is a characteristic, which can be related to a person, for example 'laziness'.

VIEWPOINTS OF PERSONALITY

PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACH

The psychoanalytic perspective of personality emphasizes the importance of early childhood experiences and the unconscious mind. This perspective on personality was created by psychiatrist Sigmund Freud who believed that things hidden in the unconscious could be revealed in a number of different ways, including through dreams, free association, and slips of the tongue. Neo-Freudian theorists, including Erik Erikson, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Karen Horney, believed in the importance of the unconscious but disagreed with other aspects of Freud's theories.

Below are the most prominent psychoanalytic perspective theorists:

Sigmund Freud: Stressed the importance of early childhood events, the influence of the unconscious, and sexual instincts in the development and formation of personality.

Erik Erikson: Emphasized the social elements of personality development, the identity crisis, and how personality is shaped over the course of the entire lifespan.²

Carl Jung: Focused on concepts such as the collective unconscious, archetypes, and psychological types.

Alfred Adler: Believed the core motive behind personality involves striving for superiority, or the desire to overcome challenges and move closer toward self-realization. This desire to achieve superiority stems from underlying feelings of inferiority that Adler believed were universal.

Karen Horney: Focused on the need to overcome basic anxiety, the sense of being isolated and alone in the world. She emphasized the societal and cultural factors that also play a role in personality, including the importance of the parent-child relationship.

TRAIT APPROACH

The trait perspective of personality is centered on identifying, describing, and measuring the specific traits that make up human personality. By understanding these traits, researchers believe they can better comprehend the differences between individuals.

Below are the most important trait perspective theorists:

Hans Eysenck: Suggested that there are three dimensions of personality: 1) extraversion-introversion, 2) emotional stability-neuroticism, and 3) psychoticism.

Raymond Cattell: Identified 16 personality traits that he believed could be utilized to understand and measure individual differences in personality.

Robert McCrae and Paul Costa: Introduced the big five theory, which identifies five key dimensions of personality: 1) extraversion, 2) neuroticism, 3) openness to experience, 4) conscientiousness, and 5) agreeableness

SITUATIONAL APPROACH

Certain situations and circumstances can influence a person's day in a positive or negative way. Depending on the circumstance, a normally positive person may become more negative. On the other hand, a traditionally pessimistic person may appear to be more positive. It is human nature for emotions and personalities to differ depending on what is happening in our lives.

Even if we are not aware of what others may be going through, it is reasonable to assume that certain situations in the lives of all individuals impacts their personality. If situations can influence personality and personality can predict behavior, then situational influences also contribute to predicting behavior. In 1968, Walter Mischel published a book entitled *Personality & Assessment*. In his book, Mischel argued that an interactionist approach was best suited when exploring personality, situations, and behavior. This interactionist approach believes that both personality and situational circumstances create behavior. In addition, Mischel explained that personalities tend to differ across a range of situations (personality at work versus home); however, they keep consistencies within similar situations (work meetings). This revelation created an upset in the traditional view of personality by arguing that personality stability and instability can each exist at the same time.

The Situational Approach to Personality showcases behavior based specifically on a particular situation or environmental constraint. Psychologists look at an individual's observational learning and the learning aspects of social reinforcement seen as a result.

INTERACTIONAL APPROACH

When a sports psychologist uses an interactional approach, they have to consider both situational determinants and personality traits exhibited by the individual. The interactional approach considers both psychological traits and situational influences on behavior. The two aspects mix and can alter behavior. Your psychological traits and environmental influences interact and combine in unique ways to sculpt your behavior.

The Interactional Approach to psychology allows for a degree of interaction between states and traits. This approach seeks to understand how behavior is influenced by both personality and social learning in the environment.

USING PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES

Personality measures such as Myers Briggs Type Indicator, Insights, or Lumina Spark are the personality measures that most often get used in teams. These provide an indication of people's general personality tendencies, which can be helpful to accelerate the learning about people working together for optimum team dynamics and results.

Positive psychology measures such as Realise2, Virtues in Action Survey of Character Strengths, Fordyce Emotions Questionnaire, BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory, and Grit Survey are measures typically used for individual awareness and skill training. These provide a snap shot of psychological skills and characteristics that focus on the promotion of strengths and the development of psychological skills to maximise personal growth and performance.

Mental health and well-being measures such as Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS), Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), Satisfaction With Life Scale, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale are measures used to assess mental health and well-being indicators. These can be used as screening tools at the beginning of the season and potentially throughout the year if relevant for some athletes.

Performance skills measures that either measure levels of skills such as Sport Confidence Inventory and Athlete Coping Skills Inventory or usage of psychological skills in sport such as Test of Performance Strategies are measures used to get an understanding of current level and/or usage for psychological skills training to match the mental demands of their specific sport's requirements. These are a great way to introduce psychological skills training into sports performance.

All of the above-mentioned measures are self-report questionnaires with the aim of quantifying aspects of an athlete's psychological traits and states, so of course they involve people assessing and rating their perception of themselves. However, questionnaires are not the only way to evaluate psychological skills...

Observable behaviours can also play a valuable role in developing a common language and monitoring of psychological skills in individuals and teams. One of the most difficult things in creating consistent standards of elite performance, particularly when it comes to psychology, is measuring... However in the case of behaviours that we want to see around here, it simply means we need to articulate the types of behaviours through a qualification process (as opposed to typical quantification processes). Qualification measurement is different to quoting numbers, but it is relatively simple to define the behaviours you want to see. For example, if we want to define whether people are bouncing back from mistakes on the football pitch, we can describe the types of actions we would see if people are doing this successfully.

Another effective skill training method we've used has been the integration of psychophysiological measures such as heart rate variability. Questionnaires rely on perception whereas observable behaviours and psychophysiological measures are closer to 'black and white'.

Measurement and monitoring is useful and provides guidance to progress, however it's vital that the goal of the measurement is determined upfront. All of these six categories of measures have their place in individual and team sport performance and can be used with great validity by professionals who understand how to administer, interpret, and utilise as a tool to assist athletes to perform to their potential.

GUIDELINES FOR USING PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES

Most sport psychology practitioners would agree that, as described earlier, gathering information about athletes' thoughts and feelings does not always require a validated psychological inventory. Inventories, however, have particular value in determining the sources of performance dysfunction, performance impairment, and possible clinical treatment .

Determine the Inventory's Purpose

Inventory authors should clearly state the inventory's purpose, why it was developed, and its intended function. Was it intended to merely obtain information or to describe a sample for demographic purposes? To address a research question and to analyze data for research purposes? To test the effectiveness of an intervention, strategy, or treatment? To diagnose a particular aspect of the person's current mental state? To measure selected personal characteristics of the sample? Once the purpose of the inventory has been determined, consultants need to determine whether that purpose meets their goals or needs.

Confirm the Inventory's Psychometric Properties

Is the measure valid and reliable? SPCs may confidently determine that a measure possesses acceptable psychometric properties by reading the original publication of a measure, examining that measure's manual, or relying on subsequent research that addresses the reliability and validity of the measure. Consultants need to pay particular attention to evidence that the inventory is reliable (e.g., shows acceptable .70 or higher levels of test-retest stability) and valid (e.g., shows construct validity, is significantly correlated with related measures, or is not correlated with measures with which it should be unrelated).

Determine Objectives and the Conceptual Framework

Before selecting an inventory and the research article from which it was generated and validated, the SPC should identify the conceptual framework being studied so that data analyses and results can be generalized to other (similar) samples, additional research questions, and other published studies in the literature.

Determine Whether the Inventory Is Intended to Assess the Athlete Statistically or to Compare the Athlete's Scores Against Norms

Instruments may be used to gauge the relative strength or influence of various traits on some outcome measure. Inventory users need to ascertain whether there are standards or norms against which the athlete's score will be compared, and if these norms are valid and compatible for the characteristics of the sample under scrutiny. The availability of these norms greatly enhances the usefulness of an inventory for consultation or research.

Determine the Inventory's External Validity

External validity "is the degree to which the conclusions (in the practitioner's study or data collection) would hold for other persons in other places and at other times" (Trochim, 2001, p. 42). Can the inventory's accuracy in measuring what it is supposed to measure be generalized to other clients and samples? Is the inventory useful and compatible with the needs of intended clients and for targeted specific situations? Determining this information helps the inventory user specify whether, and to what extent, the intervention or findings can be generalized.

Assess the Role of Inventory Scores in Consultation Effectiveness

SPCs should examine the extent to which the inventory score(s) will promote more effective consultation in improving the athlete's mental, emotional, or performance status. Inventory scores may not be compatible with the athletes' perceptions of their "problem" and may circumvent the reason they are seeking sport psychology consultation.

Obtain Prior Written Consent and Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Is the athlete willing to complete the inventory? In educational settings, has the SPC received IRB approval and the athlete's written consent (and for athletes younger than 18, the parents'

written consent)? Can the athlete withdraw from completing the inventory or participating in the consulting process at any time without penalty? If the athlete is unwilling to complete an inventory, then the data's integrity may be compromised.

Establish Trust Between the Consultant and Athlete

Have the issues of self-disclosure, confidentiality, candor, and trust been addressed with the athlete before or during inventory use? Will the athlete feel comfortable responding accurately, honestly, and candidly to the consultant or clinician? Are the athlete's responses confidential? Will the athlete's coaches have access to the data? Athletes must be assured that their responses will not be inspected by anyone other than the consultant.

Be Sensitive to Group and Cultural Differences

With respect to culture, as reviewed earlier, identify any unique characteristics of inventory item content, scoring, and interpretation of scores that are different from the data used when the inventory was constructed. Individual differences exist among cultures and individual athletes on the willingness to disclose personal (and "private") information.

Ensure Data Accuracy

The interpretation of inventory scores should be absolute, with virtually no uncertainty about interpreting those scores. Knowing, for instance, whether the inventory is measuring a psychological state or a trait is important with respect to expecting a change in scoring, or whether these are stable characteristics that may or may not underlie the issue(s) under discussion.

Interpret Scores With Norms

Determine if norms exist that are compatible with the athlete's characteristics, sport type, and objectives of inventory outcomes. An athlete's scores could be compared, either intra- or inter-individually, against these norms to determine their rank or percentile. Is there a "correct" score? Is a score designated as high or low? Is there a desirable or undesirable score?

COGNITIVE STRATEGIES AND SUCCESS

It is becoming increasingly clear that there is a strong link between well-being and performance. Whether it is at work, in the classroom, or on a playing field, our emotional and physical health has an impact on our ability to perform. For student-athletes, this is especially true. Implementing these strategies will help you perform at the highest level on and off your venue of competition.

There are certain mental and *cognitive strategies* that athletes can use to help themselves with competition and *athletic success*. Successful athletes show a number of cognitive strategies, such as:

- * regulating and managing arousal levels,
- * showing self-confidence,
- * using concentration and focus,
- * feeling in control and not forcing things,
- * using positive imagery and thought,
- * exercising commitment and determination,
- * setting goals,
- * having well-developed plans and well-developed coping strategies

BREATHING STRATEGIES

Breathing is a function of life we rarely think about and comes to us as second nature. Nevertheless, focused breathing can have profound effects on your ability to relax, regulate your emotions, reduce anxiety, and distract your mind from potential negative thoughts. Every individual is different, however using some of these simple breathing exercises can help you benefit from deep mindful breathing in stressful situations.

RELAXATION BREATHING

The great thing about relaxation breathing is that it is a tool which you can use anywhere and anytime to help manage stress and emotion.

COGNITIVE SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

There are many things to focus on in life. Add in the pressures of being a student-athlete to the load of an everyday college student and you can be overwhelmed. Nevertheless, helpful cognitive skills and strategies can be employed to process difficult times and achieve positive outcomes.

COGNITIVE REFRAMING

Cognitive reframing, also known as cognitive restructuring, is a skill taught to individuals to notice negative and intrusive thoughts and actively work to challenge/change those thoughts.

VISUALIZATION

Another way to destress and relax is to visualize yourself in a peaceful, comfortable, inviting place. Visualization can be done in many environments and time frames.

- Start with a relaxation breath or two to center yourself and focus on the moment.
- Imagine yourself in the scene you have selected and slowly allow yourself to experience what you see, hear, smell, feel and possibly taste.
- Imagine the scene over time, like watching the sun go down, and how the scene changes and what your senses experience as it changes.

- Once you decide to end the visualization, bring your focus back to your breath for a moment before moving on to the next thing you need to do.

MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) can help relax tired and stressed bodies and minds and prepare you for a good night of sleep. This tool can be used when dealing with anxiety, stress, sleep difficulties, depression, and overall well being. Learning how to relax is a skill which can be used in any situation. Just as it takes time and practice to learn skills for your sport, PMR takes time and practice, but the benefits can be exponentially rewarding. This activity is most effective when you can carve out 15 to 30 minutes of time with minimal distractions. Bedtime can be ideal, but there are other times when it can be effective and it can be done both lying down and seated.

IDENTIFYING ROLE IN UNDERSTANDING PERSONALITY

Everyone has different preferences that make up their personality type, and some personalities work better together than others. Your particular personality type might make it really easy to work with one colleague and leave you struggling with another. Understanding personality type can help you to understand your preferences and the preferences of other people and how or why these might be different. Personality types are useful for recognising how we lead, influence, communicate, collaborate, negotiate business and manage stress.

Our personality types — along with different work ethics, opinions, and approaches — make it difficult to get along perfectly with everyone all the time. However, being aware of your own personality style makes you more likely to observe the traits of those around you. This allows you to adapt your style to theirs or provide them with information in a way that will get their attention, which can go a long way in helping you understand yourself, as well as your colleagues!

BENEFITS OF UNDERSTANDING ONE'S ROLE IN PERSONALITY

Know your preferences. We all have our own psychological type preferences, and operating within these preferences typically allows us to be most efficient, effective, and our most comfortable selves. Conversely, operating outside these limits requires more time and energy and usually results in lower quality work. Understanding these boundaries — and knowing when you're within or outside them — can improve your productivity, efficiency, and time management skills.

Avoid conflict. Understanding your personality type can diffuse conflicts before they arise. If you know you tend to have a knee-jerk reaction when a problem arises, you can adjust this behavior and be more receptive to the situation. Conversely, if you're usually quick to accept

responsibility for a problem — even if it's not your fault — you can train yourself to be more analytical and evaluate the situation before determining how to address it.

Appreciate diversity. Recognizing how your personality type differs from and interacts with others' types can give you a great appreciation for diversity and what it adds to your team, work environment, and company. Sometimes it's really nice to have that outrageously creative mind helping you generate ideas for solving a problem when you've hit a roadblock yourself.

Find the right career. Your personality type plays a big role in whether you're suited for a particular career, how well you perform your daily responsibilities, and even your overall job satisfaction. Understanding personality type helps you find the right career for you. For instance, if you are very extroverted, you likely won't fare well in a position where you don't interact with people. Meanwhile, an introvert probably isn't going to be as satisfied in a customer service position.

Improve decision-making abilities. How you make decisions is based on your sensing versus intuition preference. If you are a sensing person, you're more likely to feel out a situation before making a choice. You engage all five senses to gather the right information. If you're more reliant on intuition, you will probably make a choice based on instinct. Tend to go with your gut? Try to better assess the choice at hand before making a decision. On the flip side, if you're a sensing person, don't over analyze the external factors to the point of paralyzing your decision making abilities altogether.

The theory behind personality type is that we are born with, live with, and die with our type. It will develop and evolve over time. We might choose to use it differently or apply it differently depending on our experiences. But it will usually remain the same throughout our lives. By understanding personality types more fully, you can learn to appreciate your strengths and recognize your weaknesses, as well as those of the people around you.