

**Performance Psychology**

What are the **GREATEST** mental or psychological challenges I face in sports and performance? (preparation, performance, and post-performance)

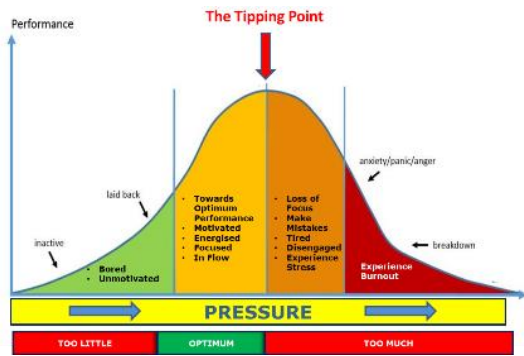
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What are my **BEST** performance psychological states?

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What are my **WORST** performance psychological states?

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What's my tipping point red flag? \_\_\_\_\_

**Performance Psychological Factors**

Relaxation and Arousal: \_\_\_\_\_

Self-Talk: \_\_\_\_\_

Imagery and Visualization: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal Setting and Motivation: \_\_\_\_\_

Concentration and Energy Management: \_\_\_\_\_

Ego Attachment and The Great Paradox: \_\_\_\_\_

The Zone and More: \_\_\_\_\_

## Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercise

To begin, sit up tall with your seat planted firmly on the ground, and imagine each of your vertebrae stacked one on top of the other, all the way up your spine, with your head resting comfortably atop your shoulders. You can close your eyes if you like, or, if you prefer, you can leave them open slightly, allowing your gaze to rest unfocused on a spot on the floor a few feet in front of you. Many of us develop the habit of breathing into our chest and tightening our abdomen as we move throughout the busyness of our lives, so it may take a few moments to find a comfortable rhythm of belly breathing. Place one of your hands, palm open, flat against your belly just above the belly button. Place the other flat, opened against your chest. Allow the muscles in your abdomen to relax, letting your stomach expand and deflate as you breathe down into your belly. Breathing in, pull the breath all the way down to your abdomen, allowing it to expand. As you continue breathing this way, see if you can notice your chest standing still and your abdomen expanding and collapsing. Feel your hand rising and falling with the rhythm of your breathing and see if you can intentionally take in more air with each inhalation, intentionally exhaling more with each exhale. Notice any changes that occur by breathing this way. You can leave your hand on your belly as long as you like, or, when you feel at ease, maintaining a gentle awareness of the breath traveling down into your belly, you can place your hand wherever it feels right to you. (Pause for 1 minute of breathing) Now, take one more deep, full inhalation, and then imagine that your belly button is trying to reach all the way back to your spine as you slowly and completely exhale. When you're ready, you can open your eyes and return your attention to the world around you.

Modified from: Kaufman, K. A., Glass, C. R., & Pineau, T. R. (2018). *Mindful sport performance enhancement: Mental training for athletes and coaches*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Additional recommended resource: Cunningham, R. (2017). *Yoga for athletes*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics

## Acceptance Commitment Exercise

1. Sit in a comfortable position and hold a tennis ball in your hand.
2. Close your eyes and focus on the feel of the tennis ball in your hand. Notice the weight, the texture, and the temperature of the ball. Even give it a smell.
3. Bring your awareness to your breath. Notice the rise and fall of your chest and belly as you breathe in and out. The focus should be on your tennis ball and your breath.
4. As you breathe, allow any thoughts or feelings that come up to be there. Don't judge them, just notice them.
5. Now, imagine a difficult thought or feeling that you are struggling with as a tennis player. For instance, it could be a fear of failure, a worry about making a mistake, a negative self-belief, or a team member you are not getting along with.
6. As you breathe, allow yourself to accept that this difficult thought or feeling is there. You don't have to like it, but you can accept that it is there. Decide if it's helpful to your performance. If it is, then keep it. If it's not, then imagine setting it down by your side and bringing your breath and your tennis ball back into your focus.
7. When you find your mind wandering or returning to an unhelpful thought, gently bring your mind back to your breath and what is in your hand. Don't try to force yourself to accept the difficult thought or feeling. Just allow it to be there. Be patient with yourself. This is a new skill, and it takes time to develop.
8. Continue to hold the tennis ball in your hand and notice how it feels. Is it heavy? Light? Smooth? Rough?
9. Bring your awareness back to your breath. Notice the rise and fall of your chest and belly as you breathe in and out.
10. Continue to hold the tennis ball and breathe mindfully for another minute.
11. This exercise can help you to develop the skills of acceptance and mindfulness. Acceptance is the ability to allow difficult thoughts and feelings to be there without judging them. Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention to the present moment without judgment. These skills can be helpful in dealing with difficult situations and emotions in sports.
12. When you are ready, open your eyes and put the tennis ball down.