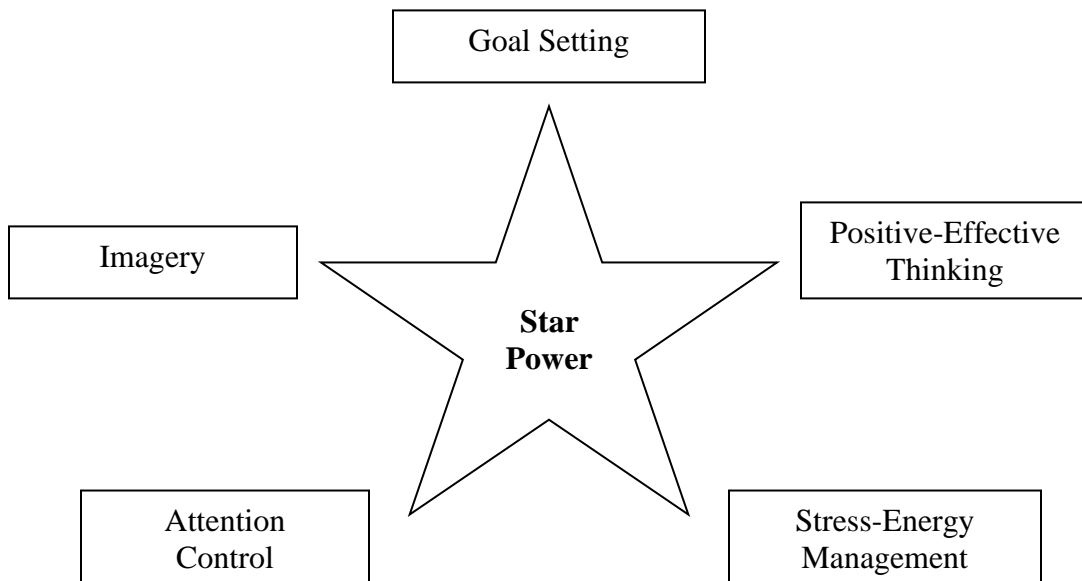


PERFORM LIKE A STAR

A Pocket Guide to Psychological Skills Training

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From Professional Sports to American Idol the importance of performing under pressure and becoming a STAR is ingrained in our pop culture. Sport and Performance Psychologists have identified five Psychological Skills essential for performing at your best when it matters the most. In introducing these skills during consultation it may be helpful to present each skill as one point on a five pointed star, all contributing to the STAR POWER at the center.



While elite athletes and performing artists spend countless hours integrating these psychological skills into their training and practice, it is possible to improve performance by systemically applying each STAR SKILL using the brief protocol presented here.

Starting with the top of the STAR (Goal Setting) and moving clockwise, mindfully address the two questions presented for each STAR SKILL. The MIND SET created in this process will provide increased confidence, sharpen focus and concentration, and build mental toughness leading to significantly enhanced performance.

Goal Setting

- What do I want to happen (Ideal Outcome)?
- What do I need to do to bring this about?

Positive-Effective Thinking

- Is what I am thinking something I would say aloud to a friend or teammate?
- Can I find something useful or beneficial in difficult or challenging situations?

Stress-Energy Management

- How confident am I about meeting this performance challenge?
- What have I done WELL in practice that I can draw on to build my confidence?

Attention Control

- What am I focusing on when I am performing at my best?
- What can I say or do to regain my focus when I find myself being distracted?

Imagery

- Can I practice my performance in my mind; seeing, hearing, and feeling everything as vividly as possible?
- Can I imagine all the joyous and positive thoughts and feelings I will have when I have completed my Ideal Performance?

The Science Within The Method

Goal Setting

There are three types of Goals: Outcome, Performance, and Process. All three are necessary for peak performance but need to be used in just the right ways. Outcome Goals typically focus on the competitive results of an event and are used for motivation. Setting only Outcome Goals can be counterproductive in that their attainment can be determined by factors outside of your control (i.e. level of opponent's play; officiating; etc.). Performance Goals focus on achieving results or objectives based upon one's own previous performances not the performances of others. For this reason they encourage you to focus on things more within your control. Process Goals focus on the precise actions the individual must engage in during performance to perform well. Focusing on Performance and Process Goals allow you to engage the 3P's for successful performance: Present, Positive, Process. The two Goal Setting questions activate both the motivational energy and the attentional focusing power of Goals, thus greatly improving the probability of performance excellence.

Positive Effective Thinking

We all talk to ourselves. When we talk to ourselves positively we help build our confidence and improve our performance. But sometimes when we are under pressure or in a challenging situation we may slip into Negative Self Talk. We call this Stinking

Thinkin'. This usually produces self doubt and lowers confidence, resulting in poor performance. The first question helps you become more aware of your self talk and beat Stinking Thinkin' with the Power of the Positive. The second question engages one of the most powerful strategies in creating a mindset for success and building mental toughness, that of Optimistic Reappraisal. This is accomplished when a performer is able to reframe negative events as challenges or opportunities for improvement.

Stress-Energy Management

Performing like a Star means getting in the zone, being totally absorbed in the task and feeling a sense of effortless control. Attaining this sense of Flow is facilitated when a performer's feeling of confidence is equal to their perceived level of challenge regarding the upcoming performance. Pre-event anxiety arises when the perceived level of confidence is not equal to the perceived level of challenge. In responding to the first question the performer can directly assess this confidence/challenge balance and begin to reduce any anxiety/stress by moving into the second question. Positive feelings associated with things that have been going well in practice or prior performances can be retrieved from the WELL and used to bring confidence levels up to the levels of perceived challenge.

Attention Control

Beginners learn from their mistakes. Noting mistakes identifies what needs to be practiced and acts as one way to measure progress. To become a STAR one needs to learn from their BEST PERFORMANCES. This requires paying close attention to what you are aware of when you are in the ZONE, totally absorbed in the action. For example, we may find that we are internally focused on our pace/level of exertion or externally focused on a single event in the field of play. Identifying our BEST PERFORMANCE FOCUS usually requires a number of introspective observations after great performances to get a clear picture of what you are attending to when it matters most. In building confidence and reducing anxiety it is essential that the performer store these snapshots of things going well in their imaginary inner WELL for retrieval when facing challenging situations.

Imagery

Practice makes perfect. All great performers are keenly aware of the profound truth in this simple axiom. Decades of research in Sport and Performance Psychology has also revealed that *practicing in your mind improves your performance*. Although there are several current theories on how mental rehearsal works, there is no question that the most effective way to insure Performing Like a Star is to vividly imagine the sights, sounds, and feel of your performance before you step out under the lights. The first question is a prompt to engage this powerful technique. The final mental preparation in the STAR POWER sequence is activated by the second question. Here the performer fully embraces their ultimate reality:

***What the Mind can Conceive
And the Heart can Believe
You can Achieve***

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