C&A Athletes Strong for Mental Health

Mindurance

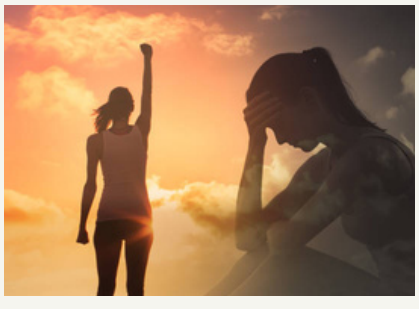
Performance Anxiety

What is performance anxiety?

Performance anxiety is indeed a common experience in challenging and competitive situations, such as athletic competitions. It often arises from the pressure to perform well, combined with a desire to succeed and a fear of failure. Athletes who are deeply invested in their sport and have high expectations for themselves are particularly susceptible to experiencing performance anxiety.

Schedule preparations

- **Focus on What You Can Control:** Encourage athletes to concentrate on aspects of their performance that they have control over, such as their preparation, effort and mindset.
- **Meditation:** Regular mindfulness meditation practice can be highly beneficial for athletes. It helps improve concentration, reduce stress and enhance self-awareness.
- **Disconnect from Social Media:** Social media can be a source of distraction and unnecessary pressure for athletes, especially in the days leading up to a contest, heightening anxiety or self-doubt.
- **Avoid Negative External Inputs:** Similarly, advise athletes to refrain from reading newspaper articles or consuming media coverage that could potentially undermine their confidence or focus, uplift and motivate them. Instead, look for materials that uplifts and motivates them.





- **Visualization and Positive Self-Talk:** Encourage athletes to utilize visualization techniques to mentally rehearse their performance and visualize success. Additionally, promoting positive self-talk can help athletes cultivate a confident and resilient mindset. Encourage them to replace negative thoughts with affirming statements and reminders of their capabilities.
- **Maintain Routine and Familiarity:** Encourage athletes to stick to their established pre-competition routines and rituals as familiarity can provide a sense of comfort and stability.

- **Stay Hydrated and Well-Rested:** Proper hydration and adequate rest are essential for optimal physical and mental performance.

C&A Athletes Strong for Mental Health

Mindurance

Preseason conditioning

Music as a performance tool

Listening to music can be calming and good for self care. Today, many athletes will have airpods in their ears listening to music or a podcast before an athletic contest. If you are going to use this strategy, choose content that enhances your confidence and puts you in good frame of mind.

The importance of music

Ultimately, the best type of music for managing performance anxiety will vary depending on individual preferences and needs. It's also important to use music as part of a comprehensive approach to managing anxiety, including techniques such as deep breathing, visualization and positive self-talk.

Consider incorporating these elements into your daily or weekly routine:

- If listening to music on the bus ride or during warming up is used with intentionality, this can go a long way in helping an athlete relax and perform better.
- Technology is beneficial when used with intentionality regardless if used to listen to music or meditation.





How will coping with performance help later in life?

Coping with anxiety as a high school athlete instills valuable skills applicable to professional life. Transitioning from high school to college or professional sports necessitates adaptability and resilience, preparing athletes for challenges in the workplace. Managing performance anxiety cultivates emotional intelligence and leadership crucial for navigating professional hurdles. Acknowledging anxiety as a natural part of growth fosters a growth mindset, promoting continuous learning and development. The management skills honed in athletics, like goal setting and teamwork, become assets in overcoming professional obstacles. By confronting psychological challenges early, athletes build a foundation for success in various life stages, facilitating advancement in their careers.

Information provided by Dr. Steve Graef, PhD. , a sports psychologist and performance coach based in Columbus. He is the owner of Mindurance – services to help athletes, performers and professionals. For more information, visit www.mindurance.org