



Optimizing Performance Potential Mental Skills Training for Triathletes

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Introduction

Do you get nervous before an event? Are you great a great triathlete in training but seem to fall short when you get to competition? Have you ever visualized perfect transitions before an event? You know, when you feel the cool air out of the water, hear the sound of the crowd clapping, and smoothly flow through each element of the transition? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then this training program is for you. The 12 week Mental Skills Training Program for Triathletes is designed to give triathletes the fundamental mental skills necessary to optimize their full performance potential on race day. You already use your mind in training, the question becomes, are you using it right?

In this mental training program, you will find mental tactics, tools, and skills that have been implemented by elite and professional triathletes. The skills included within are defined as the 5 cardinal skills of sport psychology (Henchin, XXXX). While there are hundreds of skills you can use to enhance your mental game, the 5 cardinal skills are primary for laying a solid mental foundation to build from. By the end of this training program you will be able to:

1. Assess and execute fast physical and mental form.
2. Mindfully approach race day focus and planning.
3. Focus in and develop physical and mental skill more efficiently.
4. Complete and utilize an effective imagery script of transitions.
5. Assess and mitigate debilitating self talk.

This program is meant to be interactive and has been outlined in such a way that each skills builds into the next. Each week you will be deliver a new mental performance tactic, technique, or skill set that you will focus on utilizing and developing over the weeks training within each discipline.

Day to Day Program expectations

As this program is being delivered online, you will have a unique opportunity to use the comments section of each weeks topic to ask questions, write responses, and interact with a professional mental skills coach and other athletes developing the same skills. You will find a much higher degree of success if you take time to engage with others throughout the process of the next 12 weeks.

Each week will leave you with a task to complete. These tasks are designed to help you practice the implementation of the tactics, techniques, and skills that you will be learning. Keep in mind that there are no 'RIGHT' answers, there are simply YOUR answers so take some time to think deeply and openly about the tasks each week.

Deliberate Focus Journaling

The Deliberate Focus Journal was developed as a day to day deliberate activity to improve focus within training and competition. When using this journal, keep in mind that change occurs over long periods of deliberate action. After using this log for an extended amount of time you can expect to see faster acquisition of new skills, progress in technique, and a change in mindset to positive & controllable aspects of your performance. See the example below to get a better understanding of how you should use the log.

Date: 01-01-2022

Training

Race

WHAT IS YOUR MAIN FOCUS TODAY?

Instruction: Be very specific about ONE thing you would like to focus on for the day. This focus can be a physical skill, technique, tactic or mental skill.

Today I am going to focus on...

What went well?

1. *Felt like I gave full effort*

2. *Stayed aero and relaxed on tough sets*

3. *Held and controlled cadence*

Instruction: After the event write 3 items that went well. Focus on the elements of the event that were in your control.

What do you need to do better?

Instruction: One thing that you could have done better today.

Found myself holding my breath at the end of difficult sets

How are you going to improve?

Take a reminder to breath and stay in the set until 5 seconds after the set ends on bike.

Instruction: 2-3 action items that will help you develop this part of your swim.

Focus: How well were you able to stay focused on throughout training?

Effort: To what degree of effort did you put into today?

Attitude: What level of positive attitude did you have throughout training?

Satisfaction: To what degree do you feel like you got something out of today?

Teamwork: How well did you work with yourself and the people around you?

	Daily Scales				
	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Notes: Use the notes section as a space to do what you want with. Perhaps something you want to remember from the day, a thought that occurred to you, or any questions you want to ask your Mental Skills coach.

Training

Race

Date: _____

Today I am going to focus on... _____

1. _____

3 things that went well! 2. _____

3. _____

What do you need to do better? _____

How are you going to improve? _____

Notes:

Daily Scales

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Training

Race

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1. _____

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What do you need to do better? _____

How are you going to improve? _____

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Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Race

Date: _____

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Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Process Vs Outcome Goals

Goals provide a vision of what you want to achieve within triathlon. However, in today's social environment far too many athletes find themselves engaging in their visions of grandeur rather than the work it takes to get there. This exercise is designed to help you develop an awareness over your outcome goals (what you want - the idea) but more importantly, the smaller and more process oriented goals (the work) that you can achieve to help you get there.

Outcome Goals - An outcome goal is a goal that isn't under your control. It's the big picture. For example: Being the best runner in the field.

Performance Goals - Performance goals are what you are trying to achieve. They are the building blocks that help you reach your outcome goal. To be the best runner in the field, for example, negative split every mile.

Process Goals - Process goals are completely under your control. They are the small steps you take to get to the performance and outcome goals during each training session or race. For example, in order to negative split every mile, you can focus on speed workouts 3 or 4 days a week and develop your core strength.

Take the next 10 minutes to brainstorm your biggest outcome goals over this next year. Once you have a list that you are happy with, begin to write the process goals that you can go after to help you obtain each of these outcome goals.

Outcome & Performance Goals (The Idea or Vision)

Process Goals (The Work or Grind)

Keep in mind that process goals are very specific things that you can control. These are most likely going to end up being technical or tactical skills that you can obtain or optimize to help you achieve your performance goals.

In the fields above, take a moment to think about how much time you currently engage in each of these goal types. Engagement is defined as thinking, paying attention to, acting, or working towards each goal category.

At Mental Grit we want to see the athletes we work with maximize their goal focus by achieving 80% engagement in the process and 20% in outcome goals. See if you can work towards engaging in your process goals **BEFORE** your outcome goals.

Remember **PROCESS BEFORE OUTCOME!**

The Body Check

The body check is important for athletes to use to not only bring awareness to the process but also focus in on the most important aspects of the process that will help them achieve their best performance.

Write the 3 most important physical form elements that you can check to perform at your best in each of the 3 diciplines. Along with each phsycial form element, please describe in words what the form element should be for optimal performance. Lastly, come up with a 1 word 'CUE' to help you remember the proper form and adjust as necessary.

Swim (Example)

Physical Form Element	Proper Form Description	Cue It Up
<u>Proper Pull</u>	<u>The hand and forearm drop first upon</u> <u>entering water</u>	<u>FOREARMS!</u>

Swim

Physical Form Element	Proper Form Description	Cue It Up
<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/>

Bike

Physical Form Element

Proper Form Description

Cue It Up

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Run

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

The Mind Check

The mind check is very similar to the body check that we trained just last week, however, this time we are going to focus on proper mental form rather than proper physical form.

In the section below take a minute to write down thoughts, statements, images, mantras, phrases, memories, drawings or otherwise that either facilitative or neutral. Now, we will get into more detail next week with what these mean but for the time being we just want to make sure that our minds are support us rather than tearing us down.

If you are wondering what proper mental form is, think along the lines of how a Mental Grit Athlete thinks:

**Process Before Outcome
Strength Before Weakness
Growth Before Fixed
Achievement Before Avoidance
Earning it and Owning it Before Entitlement**

Mental Form Element

Optimal Mental Form Description

Cue It Up!

Mental Form Element 2

Optimal Mental Form Description

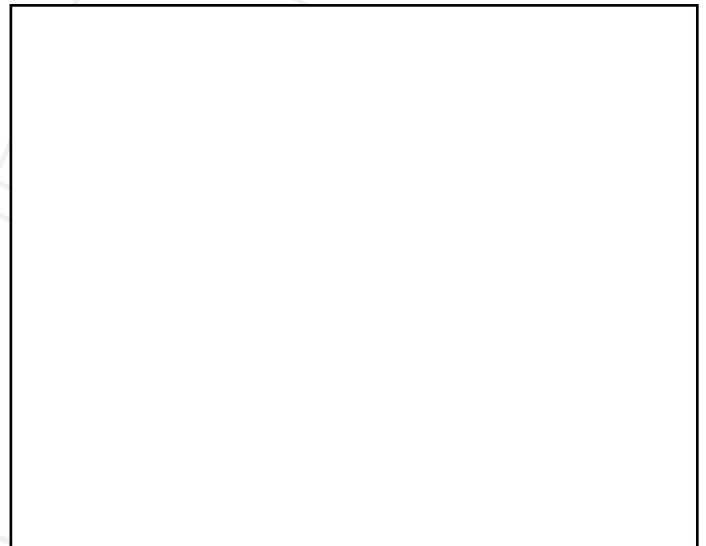
Cue It Up!



Mental Form Element 3

Optimal Mental Form Description

Cue It Up!



Self Talk - The Traffic Light

Once you have the ability to recognize facilitative, debilitating, and neutral thoughts, you can begin to use them to your advantage. One way to look at these thoughts is to think of them as a Stoplight.

- Red Thoughts: Unhelpful thoughts that stop your performance, halt your progression, or interrupt your flow.
- Green Thoughts: Facilitative and helpful thoughts keep you moving and don't interrupt your progress or performance. They allow your body and your mind to progress toward your intended destination with flow.
- Yellow Thoughts: These are your neutral thoughts. They typically are observations or tactical focus thoughts that allow you to get into a head space that is not hurting you.

Use this space to identify some of your own personal Red, Green, and Yellow thoughts that you have had/can use in training and competition:

RED

YELLOW

GREEN



Deliberate Breathing

The deliberate breath is there to help you reset and refocus on what the here and now. It is used to help rid any negative or unhelpful feeling or thoughts providing space for the feelings and thoughts you want to have within performance. For this week we will deliberately focus on the skill of deliberate breathing within our focus journal.

Begin by writing the most impactful thoughts or feels that come up on race day or within difficult training sets. What is the stuff that is not helping you in these moments?

Unhelpful Feelings or Thoughts (Exhale)	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Next, write those feelings or thoughts that you want to feel or think before or within competition. What are the things that are most important for you to help you perform your best?

Helpful Feelings or Thoughts (Inhale)	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

TRAINING WITH PURPOSE LOG - BREATHING

Prior to training and over the next week, work on using your breath to prepare for the workout as well as within the workout to reset and refocus on the present moment and most important aspect of what you are doing NOW. Use the following 5 training logs to practice awareness and facilitation of thoughts and feelings using the breath.

PRE PERFORMANCE

Training Day 1 Date: _____

What feelings, thoughts, or emotions are settling with you right now? _____

REPLACE WITH

HELPFULL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS: _____

Take a moment to reset your thoughts feelings and emotions using a few deliberate breaths. Remember to get rid of what you don't want on the exhale, inhale those helpfull thoughts and feelings, set it with the hold, then recenter yourself on the exhale.

POST PERFORMANCE

1. _____

2 things that went well: 2. _____

1 thing I need to work on: _____

What instances were you able to use the deliberate breath to reset and refocus? _____

Notes:

Daily Scales

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

“To succeed...You need to find something to hold on to, something to motivate you, something to inspire you.”

- Tony Dorsett (NFL Runningback)

PRE PERFORMANCE

Training **Day 2** Date: _____

What feelings, thoughts, or emotions are settling with you right now? _____

REPLACE WITH

HELPFUL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS: _____

Take a moment to reset your thoughts feelings and emotions using a few deliberate breaths. Remember to get rid of what you don't want on the exhale, inhale those helpful thoughts and feelings, set it with the hold, then recenter yourself on the exhale.

POST PERFORMANCE

1. _____

2 things that went well: 2. _____

1 thing I need to work on: _____

What instances were you able to use the deliberate breath to reset and refocus? _____

Notes:

Daily Scales

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

"Difficulties in life are intended to make us better, not bitter."

- Dan Reeves (Former NFL athlete and head coach)

PRE PERFORMANCE

Training **Day 3** Date: _____

What feelings, thoughts, or emotions are settling with you right now? _____

REPLACE WITH

HELPFUL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS: _____

Take a moment to reset your thoughts feelings and emotions using a few deliberate breaths. Remember to get rid of what you don't want on the exhale, inhale those helpful thoughts and feelings, set it with the hold, then recenter yourself on the exhale.

POST PERFORMANCE

1. _____

2 things that went well: 2. _____

1 thing I need to work on: _____

What instances were you able to use the deliberate breath to reset and refocus? _____

Notes:

Daily Scales

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

"Concentration is a fine antidote to anxiety."

- Jack Nicklaus (Golf Great)

PRE PERFORMANCE

Training **Day 4** Date: _____

What feelings, thoughts, or emotions are settling with you right now? _____

REPLACE WITH

HELPFUL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS: _____

Take a moment to reset your thoughts feelings and emotions using a few deliberate breaths. Remember to get rid of what you don't want on the exhale, inhale those helpful thoughts and feelings, set it with the hold, then recenter yourself on the exhale.

POST PERFORMANCE

1. _____

2 things that went well: 2. _____

1 thing I need to work on: _____

What instances were you able to use the deliberate breath to reset and refocus? _____

Notes:

Daily Scales

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

"To begin, begin."

- Peter Nivio Zarlenga (Famous Author)

PRE PERFORMANCE

Training **Day 5** Date: _____

What feelings, thoughts, or emotions are settling with you right now? _____

REPLACE WITH

HELPFUL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS: _____

Take a moment to reset your thoughts feelings and emotions using a few deliberate breaths. Remember to get rid of what you don't want on the exhale, inhale those helpful thoughts and feelings, set it with the hold, then recenter yourself on the exhale.

POST PERFORMANCE

1. _____

2 things that went well: 2. _____

1 thing I need to work on: _____

What instances were you able to use the deliberate breath to reset and refocus? _____

Notes:

Daily Scales

	1	2	3	4	5
Focus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teamwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Pre-performance Routines

What is a pre-performance routine?

A pre-performance routine is a predetermined, consistent collection of thoughts and actions that help you become mentally and physically ready for competition. Throughout this workbook, you've learned a variety of mental skills meant to prime you for archery success, and you can use any or all of those in your pre-performance routine. Just as you always dawn your uniform, prime your bow and arrows, and physically warm up before competition, a pre-performance routine is your mental "warm-up" to prepare for competition.

Why are pre-performance routines important for archers?

A pre-performance routine ensures that your thoughts and actions before competition are not left to chance. It helps you feel in control of your mental readiness and allows you to feel confident in your self and your preparation for the shoot. Performance does not depend on your pre-performance routine, but it can be helpful in decreasing anxiety and increasing confidence.

Creating your own pre-performance routine.

Pre-performance routines are specific to each athlete, depending on what mental skills work for you and your individual preferences for preparation. So, where do you start?

Think back to your best practice or competition. How did you prepare for that? Were you amped to play or completely relaxed? Were you imaging the performance you expected or were you zoning out to music?

List what you did to prepare before your best performance:

Brainstorm. To help brainstorm some pre-performance options, list 10 physical and 10 mental things you can do to prepare for a competition (feel free to use the exercises mentioned in this workbook).

Physical	Mental
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.
9.	9.
10.	10.

So, depending on how much time you have prior to your competition, go back and place a star next to the activities you'd like to do to mentally and physically to prepare yourself. This will become your pre-performance routine.

The real benefit of a pre-performance routine is that it helps prepare your thoughts and actions prior to competition. And just like with your physical preparation, your mental preparation has a specific order of events. For example, you don't secure your quiver to your body before you put on your uniform. Similarly, it's important to create an order for your pre-performance routine and maintain consistency in executing that routine each time.

Using the table below, create a routine from start to finish from the ideas you listed above. While your pre-performance routine can span days or even weeks prior to competition, most triathletes use it specifically for the 2 hours just before an event. Feel free to construct yours however best fits you.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Practice, practice, practice! Practicing your routine is paramount in keeping it consistent. Start by practicing during training so you feel more comfortable and confident when you use it prior to competition.

Your performance **doesn't depend on your pre-performance routine**. Your pre-performance routine isn't something that, if you don't complete it, stresses you out (like a superstition!). Instead, it's an activity meant to further prepare you. If you're running late for a competition, your routine should be flexible enough to use whatever pieces you can, time permitting. Pre-performance routines are also helpful in case you get stopped in the middle of competition for some reason (e.g. rain delay) and you need to get yourself focused and back in competition mode before resuming. While pre-performance routines are best practiced in full, start to finish, using these skills and the routine in a flexible manner are beneficial given a variety of circumstances.

Example

Activity	Purpose	Time Prior	Duration	Location
Imagery - Transitions. Walk through mental scripts both swim to bike and bike to run.	Prime focus in transitions and gain confidence in set up	60 minutes	10-15 minutes	In transition area.

My Pre-performance Routine

Activity	Purpose	Time Prior	Duration	Location

Present/Process Focus VS Future/Outcome Focus

For this week we again return to developing your focus to primarily be on the process of the race before the outcome. As we approach race weekend we get a bit more focused on making some decisions about the race now. In this exercise, take a minute to think about where your focus could go during the race regarding any outcomes (i.e. beating another person, getting a certain time, not getting passed by another specific individual, any specific place you want to take etc.). Write these under outcome focus.

Once you have done that, take a minute to write down the most important controllable process elements that you can focus on to go fast over a long period of time.

Outcome or Future Focuses





Swim Most Important

1.

2.

3.

Bike Most Important

1.

2.

3.

Run Most Important

1.

2.

3.

Swim	
Description of Optimal Process Focus	Cue Word
1.	
2.	
3.	
Bike	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Run	
1.	
2.	
3.	

Imagery

What is Mental Imagery?

Athletes: Take a moment to think back to your best performance of the last season. Picture the crowd, and the location it took place, see your competitors, try to experience how you felt as the event started, recall what you were thinking as you prepared, feel your reaction as you finished the event. As you thought about your best performance, were you able to make the experience “real”?

Mental imagery is a skill athletes can tap into to help reach their goals. Imagery can also be used to help adjust per-competitive and competitive mood and energy levels (for example, if you are too nervous, you can help yourself relax by mentally taking yourself to a quiet, calm environment). Finally, imagery can be effective when learning a skill through mental practice– an athlete can work on turns without getting in the water! Read on to learn more about what a powerful tool imagery can be.

Most athletes already use mental imagery naturally, though often not in a systematic or purposeful manner. Similar to physical skills, mental skills such as imagery need to be practiced and used in a variety of settings so that one can call on them when the pressure is on.

Included in this edition of the Mental Toolbox: Imagery is a brief introduction to when and how to use mental imagery. Also included at the end of the chapter is a guide for coaches on teaching mental imagery, complete with exercises and imagery scripts for two different age groups.

How Can Imagery Improve Performance?

In addition to the ways athletes in the above stories described their uses for imagery, there are a number of other uses for this versatile skill.

To see success: Athletes can see and feel themselves achieving goals. This helps build confidence that these goals can be achieved. This supports the adage “Seeing is Believing”.

To motivate: Sometimes in the middle of a long period of training, it can become difficult to maintain the proper intensity level needed to get the most out of practice. Base training in the pool can be mentally challenging, to say the least.

Thoughts and images of past and future competitions can be helpful in maintaining persistence and intensity level while training. **To manage energy level:** Imagery can be used to change energy level, using calming images to relax, or energizing images to “psych” up.

To learn/perfect skills: Imagery can be used as an additional form of practice to help master a particular skill. Or, imagery can be used to correct errors in swim technique--either by reducing complex movements to simple skills or slowing the movements down to better analyze them for technique errors.

To refocus: During practice and competition, many distractions can arise that prevent an athlete from maintaining an optimal focus. Imagining what to focus on can often help get an athlete back on track, by helping remind her about what is important.

To prepare for competition: Just as a swimmer needs to prepare physically for competition by stretching and warming up, he needs to get mentally ready. He can imagine himself in the physical competition environment and mentally rehearse key elements of his performance. He can also prepare for the unexpected by imagining himself in difficult situations and then see himself successfully dealing with them. Finally, he can also see himself succeeding, touching the wall with a best time.

To evaluate performance. After a swim, imagery can be used to evaluate performance. An athlete can replay her swim in her head, to reinforce what she did well and evaluate those aspects that need to be improved.


To help recover from an injury. Injuries are no fun. However, there are mental skills athletes can use to help in the recovery process- imagery being one such skill. A swimmer can use imagery to visualize herself healing from her specific injury; and to visualize performing specific skills in their sport to stay “fresh”.

EXTERNAL IMAGERY DEVELOPMENT

Ask a partner to help you with this task by filming you. For safety, do not attempt to gather camera footage from the front angle.

Once you have your footage, look over each angle and take yourself through your transition in your mind using the footage for guidance. You do not need to analyze this, just be aware of what you look like from an outside perspective.

Write down any aspect of your image that you might need to focus on for you to perfect the sequence. What is your body language like? Where is your body in relation to your transition space? How is your attitude?



INTERNAL IMAGERY DEVELOPMENT

Imagery is most powerful when you use all of your senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and the feeling of your body moving. While you make the transition in your mind, take a moment to focus on each of the senses individually and write down what you find. Focus on one question over the T1 transition.

What do you see?

What do you outwardly feel?

What do you hear?

What do you feel internally?

What do you smell?

What do you taste?



Race Strategy - Make the Decision

This week we take a look at strategy and decision making around the key points of the race. Most of this decision making will occur between you and your coach but you should still walk through these questions with your coach to be on the same page. If you do not have a coach please proceed to answering the following questions as best as you can.

Note: In most cases you will be able to find a course map or at least have an idea of the key features of the course (hills, transition areas, any special course notes etc). Have a image of the course available to utilize as you progress through this exercise.

Feature - What is the key feature and where is it on the course?

Importance Level - Rate 1 to 10 on importance to a effective race.

Approach - Focus on the controllable here and decide how your are going to approach the feature in the race. Make decisions NOW so they will be easier when you get there in reality!

Feature	Difficulty Level (1-10)	Approach How are you going to RESPOND to the feature on race day?

Feature	Difficulty Level (1-10)	Approach How are you going to RESPOND to the feature on race day?

Performance Readiness Plan

Mental strategy facilitates consistent optimal performance by addressing two of the most fundamental performance attributes: Preparation and Focus. Generally, this process involves setting an optimal state of the attribute, identifying what might get in the way of you reaching that optimal state, and defining what you will do to help overcome what gets in your way to achieve your training/competition outcomes.

This is a concept we talk about a lot in the Mental Grit Training Program and is even stated in our Creed. 'Journey Before Destination' or rather, focus on what you are going to DO before and more often than we focus and put time into thoughts of what we want.

Preparation: Refers to technical, tactical, physical, and psychological readiness for training and competition. I want to know that you're fully prepared to perform every time you compete, and that you've anticipated and overcome any obstacles that would impede performance readiness.

Resilience: positive adaptation to adversity

Intensity: Essentially addresses the ideal amount of physiological activation you want at the start of a performance, in whatever way you measure it -- heart rate or something less objective (e.g., I like to feel calm, fired up, or 7/10 energy). Once you determine the ideal way to perform, then you can identify internal obstacles that can raise or lower your energy/activation level inappropriately, and develop a behavioral plan to regulate your energy level and/or mindfully acknowledge your energy level for optimal performance.

Focus: You don't want to be too wide or too narrow. You want to be able to adjust it at will, and you want to be able to mindfully acknowledge distractions so that you can focus on the right things, at the right time, every time.

3 Steps to YOUR Mental Strategy

1) Under each attribute, write out in detail what the is optimal for you going into and being inside of competition. These states should be semi challenging but reasonably achievable. These should be states that are under your control as much as possible.

2) Select internal obstacles that might get in the way of achieving your goals. These are internal obstacles that you can control, rather than external obstacles.

For example, "Thinking about the outcome or results can make me nervous, or distract me from my performance plan."

3) Write your behaviors as "If (Barrier)/Then..." statements. For example, "If I get tight or nervous because I am thinking about results then I will mindfully bring my focus back to optimal focus, breathe slowly, and accept that even if I am nervous, I can still perform when I stick with my plan."

**Once this is in place, use it! Once you have used it, come back to it and evaluate what worked, what did not work, and what you are going to try differently next time if anything. **

Adapted from: Cohen, A. (2016) Performance Readiness Plan.

Start Date

Revision Date

Completion Date

Performance Readiness Plan

Preparation: technical, tactical, physical, and psychological readiness for training and competition

Goal: _____

Obstacle: _____

Behavior: _____

Coach Evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Athlete evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Resilience: positive adaptation to adversity

Goal: _____

Obstacle: _____

Behavior: _____

Coach Evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Athlete evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Intensity: ideal amount of physiological activation for optimal performance

Goal: _____

Obstacle: _____

Behavior: _____

Coach Evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Athlete evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Focus: concentration on the most important aspects of a task, switching attention appropriately, and mindfully letting go of distractions (refocusing)

Goal: _____

Obstacle: _____

Behavior: _____

Coach Evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Athlete evaluation (Green/Yellow/Red)

Start Date

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Goal: _____

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Intensity: ideal amount of physiological activation for optimal performance

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Obstacle: _____

Behavior: _____

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Behavior: _____

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