

Gaining Peak Performance Through Mental Preparation



**Peter Papadogiannis,
Ph.D.**

February 9-10, 2008



What is Sport Psychology?

- Study of psychological factors associated with participation in sport
- Is the application of psychological techniques to assist athletes in developing athletic skills and enhancing performance
- MMPR



Who Is Using It?

- 99% of all Canadian Olympic Athletes use mental skills training.
- Over 75% of teams at the last Olympic Games had a sport psychology consultant at the games.
- Ontario Sport Science Institute, USOC
- Most professional teams, many individual athletes
- Big 4 North American sports, Mississauga Marathon, Softball teams, Poker Players, MMA
- People realize that no matter how good you are, you can always improve.



What is Mental Toughness?



Mental Toughness: Definition

“Having the natural or developed psychological edge that enables you to:

- Cope better than your opponents with the many demands (competition, training, lifestyle) that sport places on a performer.

(Jones et al., 2002, p. 209)



Mental Toughness: What is it?

Psychological Characteristics of Olympic Champions

- High Motivation & Commitment
- Optimistic and Positive
- Uncanny Ability to Focus
- Ability to Handle Stress & Cope with Adversity
- Sport Intelligence
- Resilient

(Gould et al., 2002)

Ingredients of Mental Toughness





Mental Preparation - When, Where, & How

- Pregame
- In the Game
- Post-Game

Performance Profiling

Zones

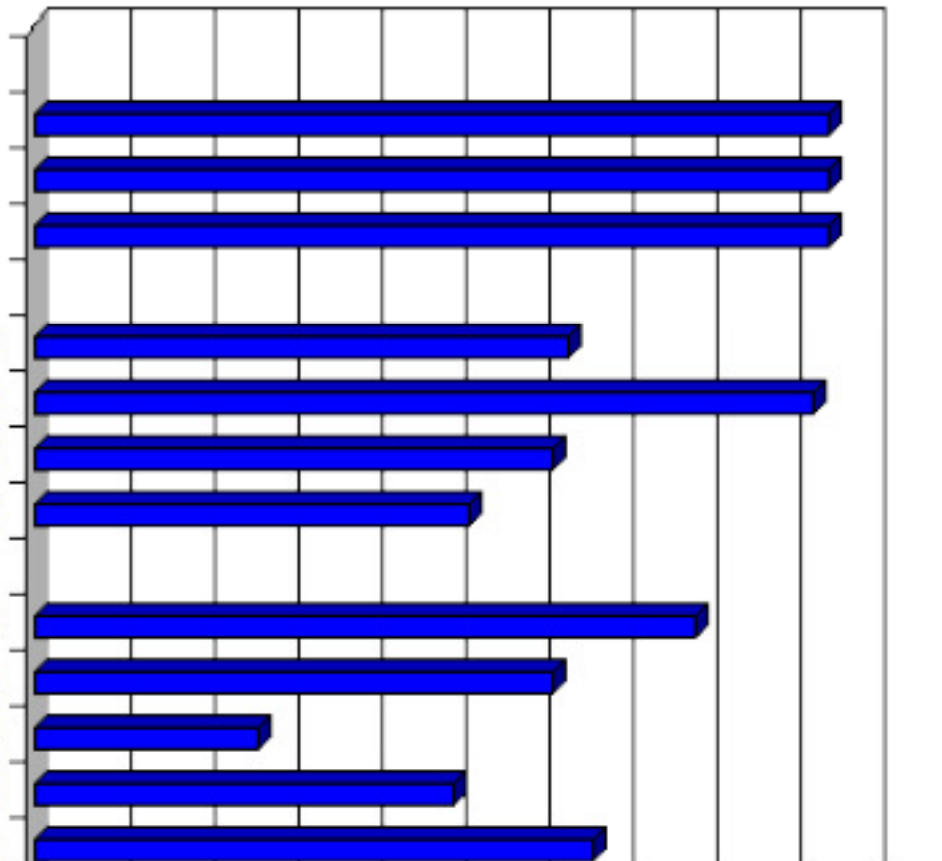
Awareness	95 %
Strategy.....	95 %
Focus	95 %

Mettle

Confidence	64 %
Competitiveness	93 %
Will	62 %
Discipline.....	52 %

Mental Toughness

Resilience	79 %
Consistency	62 %
Decisiveness	27 %
Performance Under Pressure ..	50 %
Killer Instinct	67 %



Performance Profiling

Zones

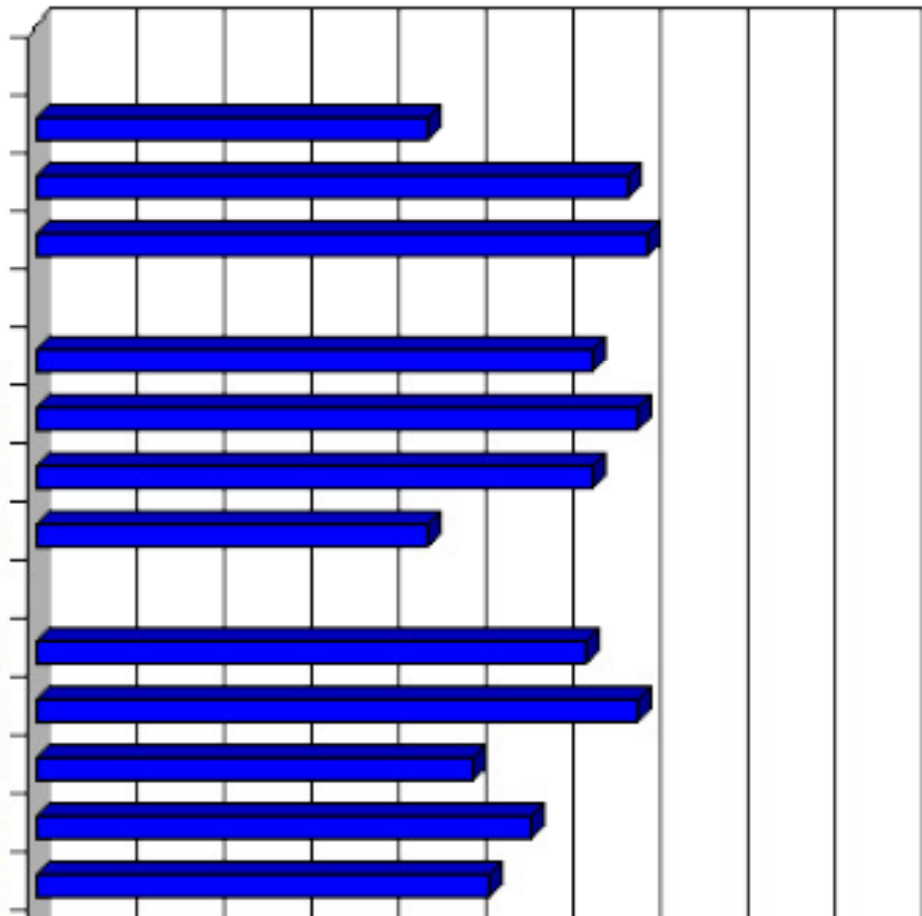
Awareness	45 %
Strategy.....	68 %
Focus	70 %

Mettle

Confidence	64 %
Competitiveness	69 %
Will	64 %
Discipline.....	45 %

Mental Toughness

Resilience	63 %
Consistency	69 %
Decisiveness	50 %
Performance Under Pressure ..	57 %
Killer Instinct	52 %



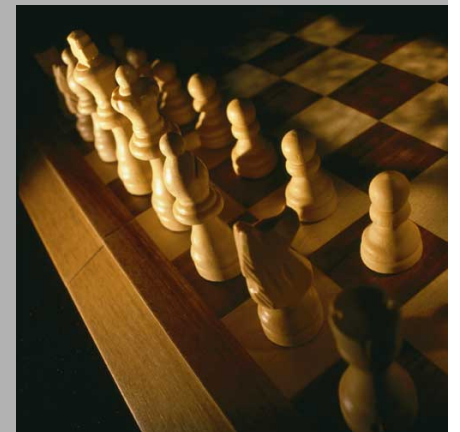


Performance Profiling

- List qualities [criteria] under each skill category (e. g., physical or mental)
- Players rate 1-10 on each quality: then you self-rate them and create a profile
- From profile discuss priorities
- What are the athlete's strengths?
Development Areas?
- Ask coaches, teammates

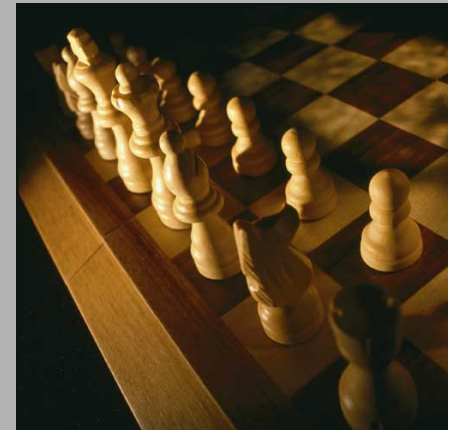
Developing a Pre-Game Performance Plan

- When to start? How much time is needed?
- Develop a routine
- Be flexible with your routine, but don't change everything for each event
- What are the similarities and differences between events



Developing a Pre-Game Performance Plan

- Identify unexpected events and stressors and devise a plan for dealing with them
- Talk to athletes and/or coaches who have been there before
- Monitoring Improvement
- Practice, Practice, Practice!



Goal Setting

- In order for any athlete to achieve their true potential they must set themselves targets
- These targets are called “goals”
- Step-by-step philosophy – putting the puzzle together... *Michael Jordan* (1994)
- Setting goals can help an athlete achieve: 90% of studies show an increase in performance when effective goals are set



Developing the Plan: Scope

- Individual vs. Team Goals

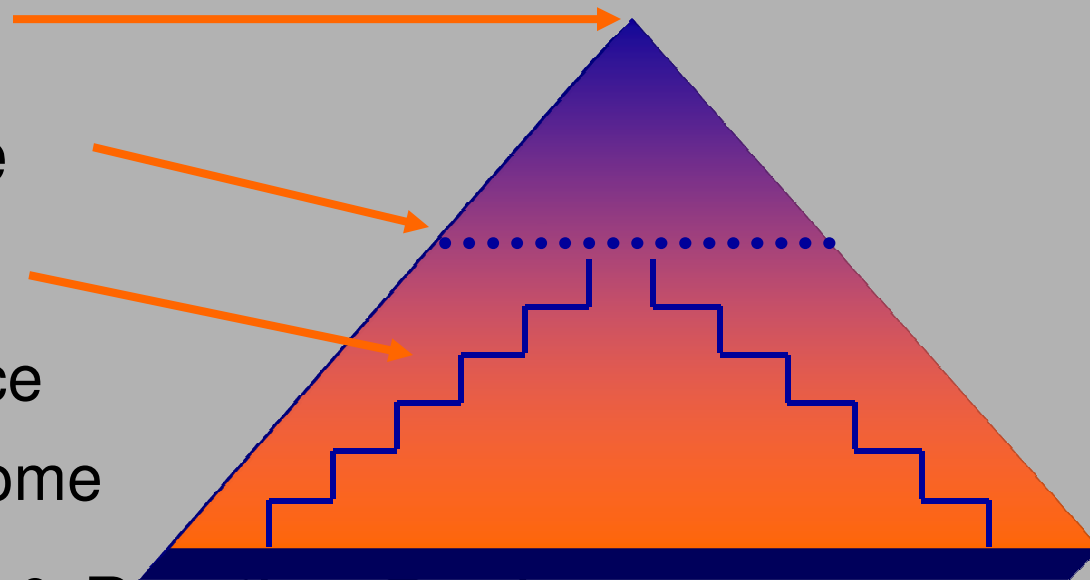
- Long-term

- Intermediate

- Short-term

Performance
vs. Outcome

- Competition & Practice Goals





SMARTER GOALS...

S – specific to the event or the skill

M – measurable targets to aid comparison

A – accepted by the coach and performer

R – realistic, challenging but possible

T – timed

E – exciting to ensure interest in the target

R - recorded “ink it, don’t just think it”



What is Mental Imagery?

- Cognitive Rehearsal of an action without overt performance (Driskell, Copper, & Moran, 1994).
- Symbolic rehearsal of a physical activity in in the absence of any gross muscular movements (Richardson, 1967).

Mental Imagery

- Jack Nicklaus, PGA Professional
- Michael Jordan, NBA Player
- Tom Brady, NFL Quarterback





Common Uses for Imagery

- Skill Acquisition & Performance Enhancement
 - Refining Technique
- Perceptual Skill Enhancement
 - Learning New Strategies
- Enhancing Psychological Skills
 - Arousal Regulation
 - Self-Confidence
 - Injury Rehabilitation



Constructing Imagery Scripts

■ Components of Effective Imagery

Identify Objective

Multi-Sensory

Real Time

Internal Perspective vs External
Perspective

Positive & Successful

Performance Environment



During the Game

Three basic *psychological competencies*:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Attention



SELF-AWARENESS

What makes you
tick during games?

**THE HEAD-BUTT FELT
AROUND THE WORLD!!**



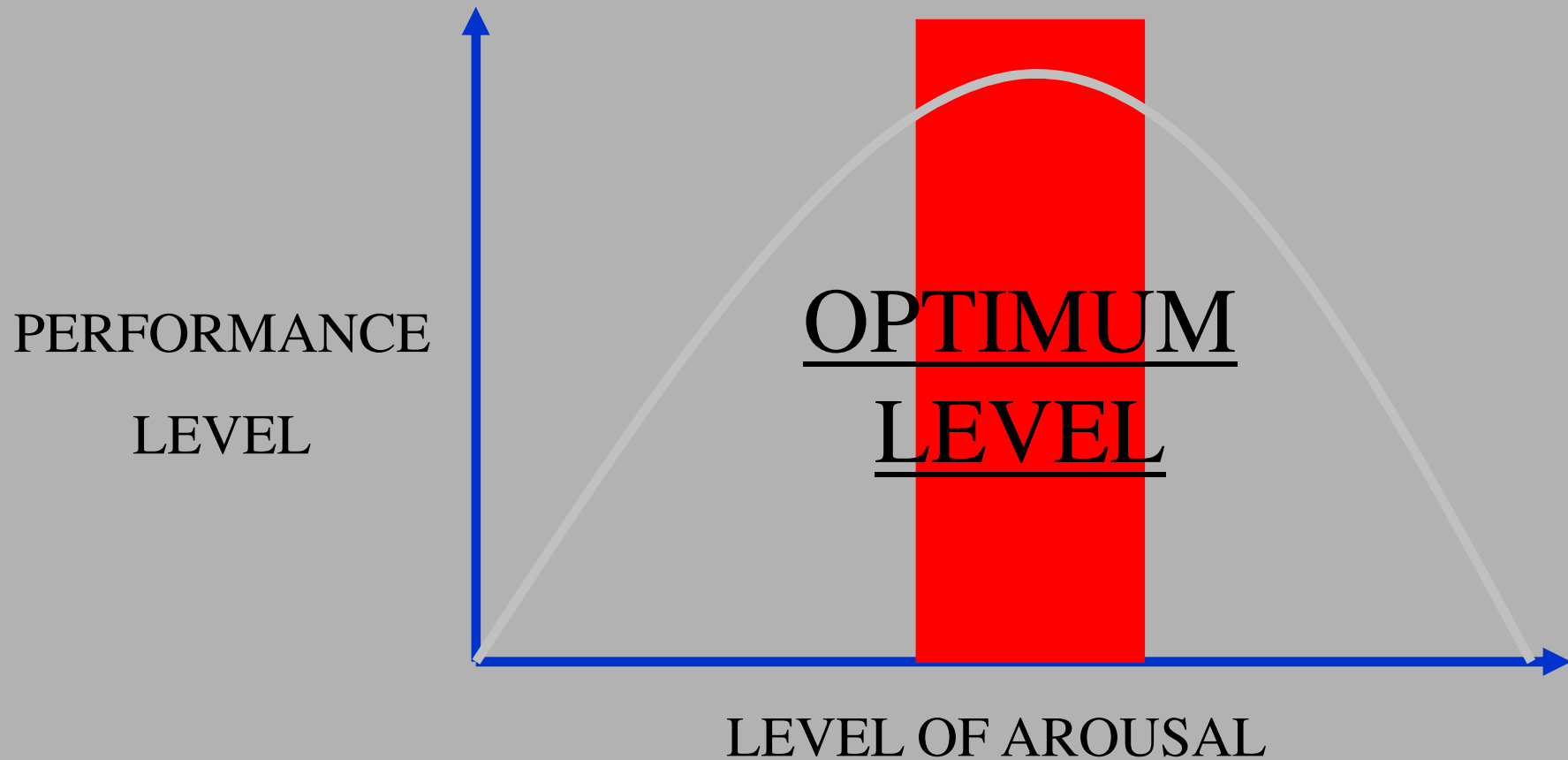
...YES, YET ANOTHER LOOK!



Arousal Management

- Inverted-U relationship arousal & performance
- strategies for under/over-arousal
- How you think 'is' how you feel, 'is' how you behave.

INVERTED U HYPOTHESIS





Optimal Arousal Functioning

- Identify recent performances
- List positive and negative *helpful* emotions
- List positive and negative *unhelpful* emotions
- Determine intensities of emotions.



ANXIETY

“Occurs when there is a substantial imbalance between an individual's perception of their ability and their perception of the demands and importance of the situation”

In competitive sporting situations anxiety is most frequently generated when a performer believes their own level of ability is not up to coping with the situation.



Self Talk

- **“I have to win”**
- **“I need to be perfect”**
- **“I’m not ready to compete!”**
- **“What’s wrong with you?!”**
- **“I am an idiot.”**



Cognitive Restructuring

What is it?

It assumes that athletes create unpleasant emotional states, such as anxiety and anger, through thinking patterns that are based on irrational beliefs. These beliefs impact behavior.

(Silva & Stevens, 2002)



Cognitive Restructuring

Who uses CR and where?

- A common thread in most sport psychology interventions
- Implemented more often by elite-level athletes
- *USEFUL BEFORE, DURING, AND POST COMPETITION!!!*



The Process of CR

1. Athletes need to *buy in* that irrational beliefs lead to distorted thinking and hinder optimal emotional states and performance.
 - Distorted thoughts should be changed or restructured.
 - Substitution of new thoughts for distorted thinking.

(Orlick, 2000)

CR Tips (continued)



- Help them recognize patterns in practice/daily life that lead to negative thought sets
- When athletes struggle with replacing old negative thoughts w/ new positive ones have them focus on a past positive experience

Changing Self-Talk

Negative Statement

Positive Statement

The referee is out to get me. I'm so mad!

I can't control the referee. I need to focus on what I can do: play smart and hard.

I need to score big for us to win. The pressure is all on me to come through or we'll lose.

The score will take care of itself. Focus on my preparation plan, relax and be confident in my training.

I'm going to retaliate for that player playing dirty.

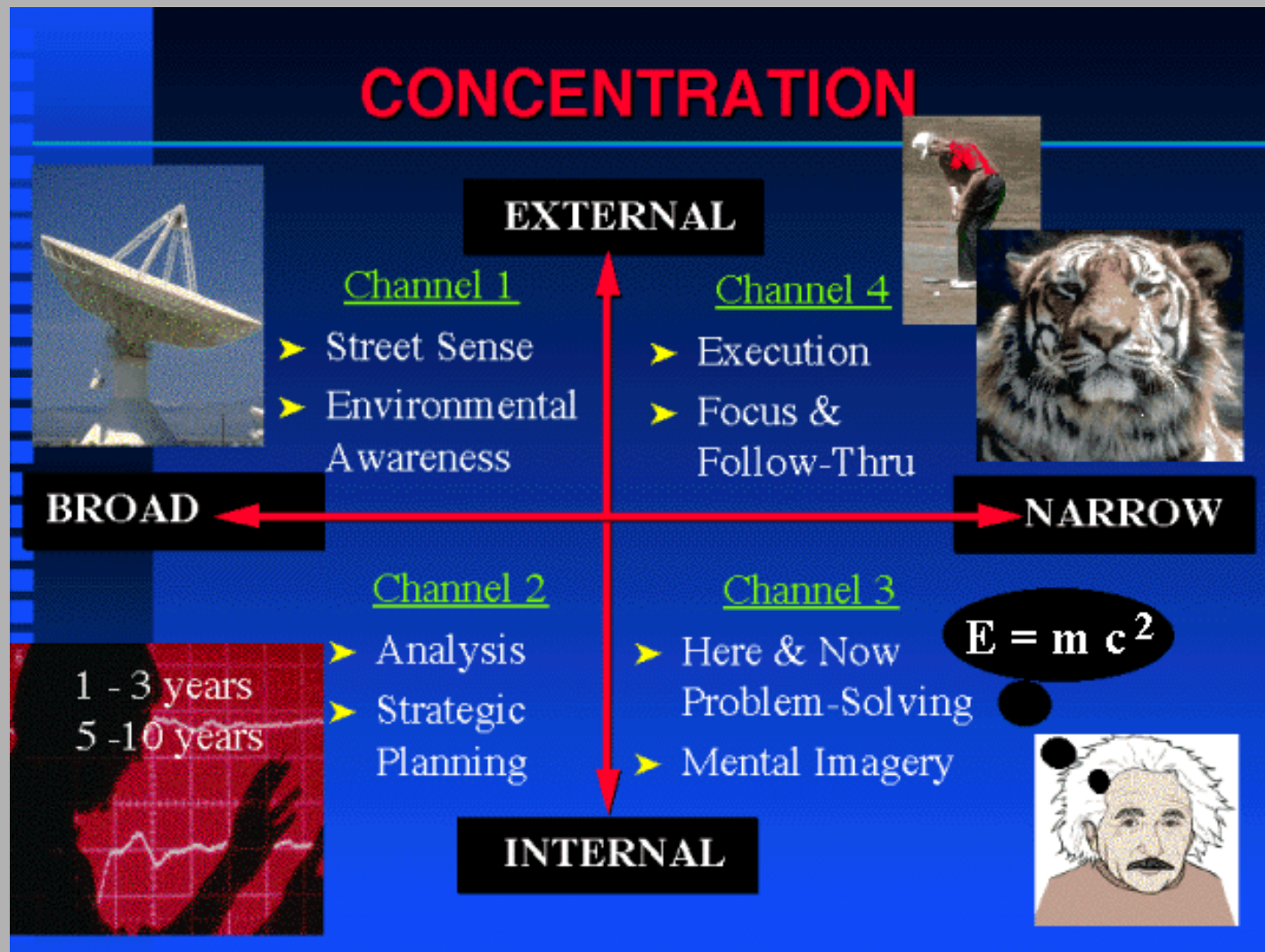
Keep control. Don't get suckered in to something that might hurt your chances to succeed.



How Do Emotions Effect Concentration?

- Regulating emotions effectively contributes to the ability to solve problems with minimal stress
- Individuals lose the ability to adjust their focus of concentration and their interpersonal behaviors to meet changing performance demands.

Role of Concentration in Performance





Postgame Analysis

- Journaling
- Skill Reassessment
- Strengths & Development Areas
- Parking
- Imagery



Contact Information

Peter Papadogiannis, Ph.D.

(416) 492-2627 X 327

(416) 220-8603

peter.papadogiannis@mhs.com

peterpapa30@msn.com