



Sport Psychology for Masters Rowers

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PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS AND PEAK PERFORMANCE

Have you ever been in 'The Zone'? Have you ever had an experience while rowing when your movements felt effortless, you lost track of time, and the boat seemed to really move? Whether you call it a peak performance, being in the zone or experiencing 'Flow,' there are common characteristics to this particular state of mind. While we have not found a way to reproduce the experience at will, there are several techniques that can be used to create the necessary conditions for a peak performance to occur.

Elite athletes already know this fact. They have developed, and consistently practice the mental skills needed for optimal performance. These mental skills are the psychological tools athletes can use to enhance their learning, training and performance. These skills do *not* replace physical training, but they can help you increase your ability to stay focused, handle adversity, control tension and anxiety, and stay confident in your abilities when performing under pressure.

The characteristics of the 'Flow' state are Skills-Challenge Balance, an Action-Awareness Merging, Clear Goals, Feedback, Task Focus, a Sense of Control, Loss of Self-Consciousness, and Intrinsic Rewards. While using psychological skills to develop these characteristics does not guarantee that you will achieve 'Flow' or find the 'zone,' you can increase that likelihood.

The skills described briefly here can form the foundation of the tools you can use to improve your performance. All you have to do is commit to developing your mental game and...

Practice, Practice, and Practice!

***Luck is what happens when
preparation meets opportunity.***

SKILLS FOR FINDING PEAK PERFORMANCE

Developing skills in the following areas can help you consistently achieve a mental state that is ripe for a peak performance.

Self-Awareness of one's strengths, limitations, thoughts and feelings teaches you about your performance and your self.

Clear Goals that focus primarily on the process of performance rather than the outcome.

Energy Management Skills allow you to regulate your energy, arousal and tension. Learn and practicing effective relaxation and "psyching up" strategies.

Imagery Skills, when done effectively can enhance technique development, competition preparation, and self-confidence.

Cognitive Skills such as self-talk, focusing skills, and cue words can help you handle distractions and stay in the present.

Once learned, these skills can be applied to any performance situation. This program of mental skills will include an honest assessment and evaluation of your current mental strategies and your commitment to improving.

SET 'SMARTER' GOALS FOR BETTER PERFORMANCE

What is your mission for the coming competitive season? What vision do you have of the success you want achieve? What do you like about rowing competitively? What are you going to do today to accomplish this mission?

Top athletes have learned to stay motivated and focused through a long season, through winter conditioning and through those periods when things just don't seem to be going their way. One of the tools they use is goal setting. There are a few basic principles to follow when setting goals.

Outcome goals focus on results. Winning a race or qualifying for a regional or national event are outcome goals. These goals can motivate you and guide you, but they are not always completely under your control.

Process goals are the action goals that focus on specific aspects of performance. Process goals are what you fall back on day-to-

day, week-to-week to stay focused. These goals are the core of your mental game.

Dream big for the long term; think realistically in the short term.

'SMARTER' Goals

Use this guide when setting your goals.

- S** - Specific
- M** - Measurable
- A** - Action-oriented
- R** - Realistic
- T** - Timely
- E** - Exciting
- R** - Recorded



THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL

The absolute most important goal you can set for yourself is self-acceptance. No matter how you perform this season, no matter what anybody says about you or your performance, make it your personal goal to accept yourself as a worthy person.

TIME FRAME FOR GOAL SETTING

Long-term goals cover the season or the year. You'll only need 1 or 2.

Intermediate-term goals should cover a week, a month, or a pre-season.

Short-term goals are clear, specific and action-oriented process goals covering 2-4 days.

Daily goals. What are you doing *today* to achieve your vision? What are you doing right now?

Make fun your goal too!

'SMARTER' Goals cont'd

Specific goals describe exactly what you want to occur. What do you have to do in order to row fast (i.e., what is the process goal for rowing fast)? That should be your goal. For example, a goal of *moving to the start line feeling confident and relaxed* (which will enable you to row better) is more specific than saying, *do my best*.

Measurable goals can be objectively measured by you or by someone else. Using the above example, you can rate your feeling of confidence and relaxation on a 1 -10 scale. Some athletes choose to monitor their pulse as a way of tracking their tension level.

Action-oriented means that your goal dictates that you *do* something to achieve an end. Example, if your not relaxed at the start line, taking a deep breath and using your self-talk to calm down.

Realistic goals look for a balance between ability and challenge. Easy goals won't motivate you and goals that are too difficult will discourage you.

Timely means keep focused on something current that is related to your goal. If your goal is nationals in May, have intermediate, short-term and daily goals that take you there.

Exciting! Set goals that have some meaning for you. Let yourself feel good about your performance without regard to outcome.

Record your goals in your mental log. Review, evaluate and adjust them as needed.

MORE GOAL SETTING BASICS

Here are some more tips to follow when setting your goals.

Remember that goal setting is a process that takes time, thought and effort. Try to avoid coming up with all your goals in one night.

Be flexible. If a goal isn't working, make an adjustment!

Make your goals public.

Tell mom, dad, friends, coaches, and teammates. Be sure to tell people who will be

supportive of your working toward your goals.

Focus on process goals that are related directly to improving your performance.

Set goals for practice and competition.

Use positive language only! State what you *want* to do (row well) instead of what you want to avoid (don't catch a crab).

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.

Abraham Lincoln

58	69	48	20	27	07	35	75	79	13
94	14	87	45	19	22	81	64	93	21
62	41	65	25	83	99	49	73	47	08
00	30	04	51	40	09	57	85	98	26
53	16	59	60	32	03	61	31	77	74
97	39	37	78	63	55	33	18	92	67
52	71	91	72	84	29	50	46	42	89
23	82	56	96	12	86	68	10	88	95
38	44	66	76	24	01	05	43	70	80
15	34	36	02	28	17	11	54	06	90

32	60	59	16	97	67	92	31	33	03
40	51	04	30	52	89	42	85	50	09
83	25	65	41	23	95	88	73	68	99
19	45	87	14	38	80	70	64	05	22
27	20	48	69	15	90	06	75	11	07
28	02	36	34	58	13	79	54	35	17
24	76	66	44	94	21	93	43	81	01
12	96	56	82	62	08	47	10	49	86
84	72	91	71	00	26	98	46	57	29
63	78	37	39	53	74	77	18	61	55