The Rowing Stronger

Guide to Mental Skills for Rowing
This is the final project for my University of Denver MA in Sport Coaching Psychology of Athletes class. Our assignment was to create a mental skills training (MST) manual for our athletes.

Although training tends to focus more heavily on the physical side of performance, the mental side is more important than most people give it credit for. MST can help improve your consistency from practice to practice, practice to competition, and competition from competition, as well as improve recovery from training, focus for training and competing, and better mental health over the course of a training career. Don't wait until you have a choking problem, or feel burned out, or have anxiety about competing, to start training your mental skills. The best time to start mental skills training is right now!

Read on and you will learn...

- Mental skills for motivation, energy management, attention, stress management, self-confidence, and psychology of injury
- How to develop a personal MST program that works for you and your training needs
- Adjusting your MST plan for training and competing

I hope this material sees you through many productive training sessions and PR races!

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Coaching is about more than the X's, O's, and technique of a sport. Through modeling, constant awareness of others and self, and emphasizing the character-building qualities of sport, coaches have the power to create a supportive and positive learning environment that can transform the lives of their athletes. Sport naturally creates the ideal training ground for learning lifelong skills of self-discipline, empathy, integrity, and love, but sport does not inherently teach these skills. It requires a coach who values these as a primary goal to use opportunities to create this kind of environment and culture through sport.

MST fits this philosophy by providing athletes with tools and opportunities to practice to improve and build skills often undervalued or neglected. Mental skills are often not developed until the athlete experiences a problem resulting from a lack of mental skills. Athletes are never too young to start developing a successful mindset with age-appropriate instruction, and doing so can avoid or mitigate such problems later in their life and career. Through MST, athletes can become better teammates and happier, healthier, and higher performing individuals. The lessons and skills an athlete learns through using MST in sport can become valuable skills that they utilize for the rest of their life, in and out of sport.
The main behavior that reflects an athlete's motivation is choice, because from the athlete's decisions come all other behaviors. Some examples of these choices are:

- Does the athlete choose behaviors and activities appropriate for their goals? This may mean choosing to train in the off-season and choosing sport activities over non-sport recreational activities.
- Does the athlete choose to give effort appropriate for their goals? How intensely does the athlete train and compete?
- How long does the athlete choose to persist in striving for their goals? Does the athlete choose to give up or persevere when faced with adversity?

Athletes who do not make choices consistent with their goals may be insufficiently motivated by their goals. This is where MST for motivation can help.

**Skill #1: Goal-Setting**

Goals are a mental skill that many people talk about but few are very intentional about in the creation, execution, and reflection process.

At the creation process, goals must be chosen that are relevant and motivating for the athlete. Set goals that are mastery oriented, such as technique, or performance oriented, such as a personal best, rather than outcome goals such as winning a race or getting a seat in the best boat, because these goals have factors not under your control. Your goals will be most motivating for you if success is 100% under your control.

At the execution process, the S.M.A.R.T. goal acronym is known about but also usually only done as an afterthought. "Get faster" is not a S.M.A.R.T. goal, so try setting goals more like this. Let's assume that your 2000m PR is 6:05 and your goal is to go under 6 minutes.

For coxswains, your goals will be more mastery oriented than performance oriented
because of the nature of your position in rowing. Consider setting goals for amount of
time spent per week reading or listening to other coxswains, preparing for practice or
race-day, or writing in a coxswain journal your thoughts from that day's practice.

- S (Specific): "Pull a 2k test in 6 minutes or less." What’s your race plan? Negative
  split? Even split? What’s your start sequence and 500m targets? The more specific
  you can be, the more likely you are to achieve your goal.
- M (Measurable): Will this be measured on static ergs, sliders, dynamic ergs, or
  water? Will you be at peak performance for this test or will it be measured under
  training conditions?
- A (Action-Oriented): "Don't crab in a race" is not action-oriented, because it's an
  avoidance goal rather than an achievement goal. To increase motivation, goals
  should be positively focused and action oriented.
- R (Realistic): To increase motivation, goals should be challenging or moderately
difficult while still being realistic. Goals that are too difficult or too easy are
  generally less motivating than goals that are realistic and still moderately
  challenging. If your PR was 6:40 and your goal was to go sub-6:00, you'd have to
  answer if that was a realistic goal.
- T (Time-Oriented): Time is a factor that should also be considered for realism.
  Having a time or deadline for achieving your goal is more motivating than an
  indefinite goal. All goals, but especially long-term goals, should have checkpoints
  and smaller goals to achieve along the way. If you are doing an 8-week erg
  program and aiming for that sub-6:00 time at the end of 8 weeks, what goals will
  you check off along the way?

Reflection is the final part of the goal-setting process. Whether you achieved your goal
or not, you can answer questions of was it too easy, too challenging, what went well,
and what would you change for next time. This will help you become a better goal-
setter over time.

Skill #2: Pre-Practice and Pre-Race Routines

Creating pre-and-post-practice and race routines can be a great source of motivation
by making preparation and recovery for your sport a source of personal pride and
identity. Pre-practice and pre-race routines can also help motivation by improving
your consistency of motivation before training and competing. Developing routines
allows you to put some tasks on autopilot, minimizing decision fatigue and
maximizing mental resources for focus, attention, and motivation. Routines take you
from "happening" to do certain athletic things to making athletic activities and
lifestyles part of your way of life and identity. Routines make it more motivating to
make the right decisions to achieve your goals because it is, "just what you do."
Coxswains can use routines too to make sure that you are prepared for practice (clothing, equipment, tools, etc.), that you know the practice plan ahead of time and what calls or focuses you'll be asked to do, that your equipment functions correctly (checking boats, speaker cords, headlamps, etc.), that you know the warmup area and race plan, and that your rowers are on time for launching.

Examples of these are:

- Preview the next day's practice or your race plan the night before. At least look at the workout and consider the intensity and technical focus required and how your training has prepared you for it. Some athletes will also add visualization into their pre-practice and pre-performance routine, which will be covered in a future chapter.
- Lay out your clothes, food, and water the night before practice, or pack your gym bag ahead of time. This is more time efficient and also provides some motivation to actually go to practice or the gym at your usual time.
- Make a playlist for your commute to the boathouse or gym or for your race warmup. Music is a powerful motivator and listening to the same few songs can help put you in a consistent zone of motivation.
- Set aside a dedicated time for active recovery activities like contrast baths, stretching, and foam rolling. Self-care is part of being an athlete and dedicating time to your self-care can be motivating to increase athletic identity.
- Write down 3–5 things that you are 100% in control of on race day that help you be more motivated for peak performance, then make those routine for race day. This could mean getting up early to take a walk and listen to music, the same breakfast, pre-race or post-race meal, pre-race playlist, pre-race warmup, etc.
The psychological energy that fuels an athlete's performance is called arousal. Managing this energy is key to consistent and high performances because not everyone functions best in the same zone of arousal. Different people, different skills, and different events will have different optimal zones of arousal.

Consider the amount of kind of energy required for a 1RM deadlift versus that of a 6000m rowing race. If you treated the 6000m race the same as the 1RM deadlift, you'd be out of energy before the 100m mark. The amount of arousal and way that you manage and focus that energy has to be different given the kind of skill you're performing and the duration of performance.

Below is a graph from Buron and Raedeke's "Sports Psychology for Coaches" textbook showing the inverse-u relationship of peformance and arousal. Athletes who have low performance at low points of arousal will need to psych themselves up to be in their optimal zone of arousal. Athletes who have low performance at high levels of arousal will need to calm themselves down to be in their optimal zone of arousal. In between the psych-up zone and the psych-out zone is the optimal zone where peak performance is attained.

So the question is, how can athletes psych themselves up and calm themselves down so that they can be in that optimal zone of arousal?

**Skill #1: Energization**

Energization is the skill of psyching up to reach the optimal zone of arousal. As with all mental skills, energization is something that needs to be practiced in stable training situations before expecting it to work in a competitive setting. You will need to learn where your optimal zone of arousal is for different tasks as well as how much, and what type of, energization is necessary to get there. Try several different energization
• Psych-up breathing is one energization skill. This is commonly used before an all-out effort, such as a max lift or sprint. Take quick, shallow breaths to rapidly transport oxygen to the muscles.

• Use a cue word and pair it with another energization techniques. Mantras are covered in the next chapter and can be particularly effective for energization. Think of a 1-3 word phrase and say it to yourself as you do a technique like psych-up breathing. The phrase should be something naturally energizing, like "push" or "powerful," but as long as it is meaningful for you it will work. To practice this, take 3-5 psych up breaths and say your cue phrase, then repeat this 15-20 times.

• Energization imagery. Visualization is covered in another chapter and can be specifically applied to energization. Below is an example of this for my own training that I made for an earlier assignment in this class. This is an example of machine-based energization imagery, but natural forces (tidal wave, flooding river, volcano, etc.) and animal forces (predator in chase) can also be used if that is more energizing for you.

• Music is used in my video and may be a part of your energization routine as well. If you are pairing it with psych-up breathing and a visualization that builds gradually, consider selecting music that matches your pace as I did.

Skill #2: Relaxation
Relaxation is the skill of calming down from an over-aroused state to one's optimal zone of arousal. Relaxation can be both physical, referring to muscle tension, and mental, usually referring to stress or anxiety. Total relaxation takes longer (10-20 minutes) and aims to help the athlete relax as completely as possible both physically and mentally. This is very useful if you are over-aroused well before a race or trying to fall asleep the night before a race, but because it can make you sleepy and lethargic, it is best avoided close to competing or training. Total relaxation can also promote recovery from workouts by reducing systemic stress. Rapid relaxation is more commonly used closer to or while training and competing and can be done in as little as a few seconds. Rapid relaxation is usually focused more on mental relaxation, but reduces muscular tension as well, and is useful for immediately pre-race anxiety or over-arousal.

- Progressive muscle relaxation is an example of total relaxation. You can follow a script like this (click for link) until you have mastered it well enough to do without a script. Here is a written script as well. The amount of time required to reach total relaxation may decrease as your mind-muscle control improves and you get more practice at totally relaxing.
- A shorter version of progressive muscle relaxation can be done just by focusing on the four main muscle groups of the shoulders, arms, and hands, then the head and neck, then the chest, back, and stomach, then the hips, thighs, calves, and feet. Breathe deeply, flex, and relax, trying to attain a greater level of relaxation with each cycle.
- You can use cue words for relaxation just like with energization. Opposite of energization, now your breathing should be slow, deep, and diaphragmatic. Take 2-3 of these deep diaphragmatic breaths, use your relaxation cue word, and repeat this 10-15 times.
- As with energization, calming music can be an effective aid in relaxation.
- Relaxing imagery can also be used. "Find your beach" applies as well to relaxing imagery as it does beer advertisements. An ocean shore, a cool mountain scene, or anywhere else that you find relaxing can be conjured up in your mind to use in relaxation.
"Pay attention! Focus! Concentrate!" are phrases athletes have heard hundreds of times from parents, teachers, and coaches. But pay attention to what? When? For how long? And how?

Attention just means directing awareness to certain information. But in sports, that also means directing awareness away from other information, and knowing what to focus on when and for how long without letting other skills degrade is a difficult task. Attention is complex, but we know that being able to attend to certain information while ignoring other information it is crucial to sport success. In rowing, it is not possible to think about everything all at once, so MST for attention focuses on developing skills to enhance concentration and develop automaticity, or the ability to perform a skill without thinking about every little part of that skill.

Skill #1: Refocus Routines

Also called "reset routines," refocus routines help an athlete regain focus after a momentary lapse. 1200m into a race, the boat jolts suddenly to starboard and interrupts your concentration on your breathing. You have to hold water around a tricky turn in a head race to avoid hitting another boat. Without a refocus routine, it's easy for these little interruptions to combine and end up completely unraveling your mindset mid-performance.

Although baseball is the best example of reset routines, rowing is unlike baseball in that you can't just step out of the batter's box or off of the pitcher's mound to perform your routine.

If you choose a physical reset routine, your movement will have to be faster, more subtle, and possibly not use your hands as they'll be on the oar. Here are some examples of reset routines that you could use while rowing without disrupting the set or others' rowing.

- Nodding your head three times
- Squeezing the oar three times
• Looking from your shoes to your pair partner's head three times

A frequent practice activity in the spring is practicing short sprints with longer rest intervals to allow for full recovery and full effort on the next set. It is not possible to be at full attention for an entire 1.5-2 hour practice, so physical reset routines can be used after a rest period to clear your mind and enhance focus for the next drill. If you are at a standstill, you could re-tighten your oarlock, move your blade from squared to feathered a couple times, re-strap your shoes, or any combination of other rowing-specific physical resets.

Mental reset routines also work and will rely on things like trigger phrases and quieting drills. Trigger phrases, or mantras, are discussed more in the next section. Much of mental preparation focuses on focusing on the present and not getting caught up in mental distractions of the past or future. Quieting drills are useful to force yourself to focus on the present when you notice your attention slipping into the past or future. Focus on each catch and release, saying to yourself, "catch....finish....recover..." and eliminate all other thoughts.

All of these apply to coxswains as well with the added benefit of being able to move your hands more freely than rowers can.

**Skill #2: Performance Mantra**

Also called trigger phrases, performance mantras have great use in redirecting attention. This could be as simple as saying, "focus," but without something to focus ON, that can be less than helpful. Consider coming up with a 2-3 word performance mantra that you can use to enhance your own focus and attention, such as, "next stroke" to represent the passing of the current stroke into the past and the focus on the next stroke. It can be something relevant to your rowing and technique or a series of words not directly related to rowing.

Counting strokes is also another form of attention mantra to refocus your thoughts on the present activities. Take a "focus-10" instead of a power-10 and focus on one relevant technical cue for 10 strokes, such as catching with your pair partner, rolling up at just the right point in the stroke, or relaxing your shoulders on the recovery.

Coxswains, you can come up with a mantra for yourself as well as for your rowers. You will get to know your boat well enough to know what performance mantra they need and when to take the focus-10 for best effect!
When success is important and you perceive an imbalance between what is demanded of you and your perceived capabilities, you feel stressed. Managing this stress in both the short-term and the long-term is key to high performances and a healthy career.

It's important to note the intentional use of the word "perceived" in the description of stress. Rowing 2000m is not inherently stressful. If you take someone who has never erged or rowed before and tell them to row 2000m as hard as they can, they'll be tired, but they probably won't find it all that stressful because

1. Success is not important  
2. They don't really know what is demanded of them  
3. They don't have any perceived capabilities

If you look at a 2000m test or race as a negative thing and doubt your capabilities, you're likely to have stress about the test. If you look at a tough opponent or 2000m test positively, as a challenge, and believe in your capabilities, then you'll likely have less stress. Generally, less stress means better performance and happier people, so let's dive into stress management.

Skill #1: Get a Clear Picture

Why ARE you feeling stressed?

Are there stressful things going on outside of rowing that are making rowing training more stressful?

Are you hungry? Tired? Cold?

Self-awareness is an important skill for stress management because it helps you to understand the true cause rather than chasing after symptoms.

It may be helpful to write out how you're feeling and why when you start to feel
particularly stressed out. If you identify several stressors that have nothing to do with rowing, that might make rowing feel less stressful because you can focus on it as a release and non-stressful activity. This activity will also help remind you of the importance of taking care of yourself, both within rowing and outside of it. Having friends outside of rowing, social activities not involving rowing, setting aside time to do something fun, or building in extra time for active recovery work, are all ways to reduce stress and likelihood of mental burnout.

Physical feelings matter too. If you get stressed out more when you're hungry, for example, find a way to have a snack ready to go, eat a little more before practice, bring some sports drink in the boat, etc., so you can avoid that.

A final tip on this is when things are stressful outside of rowing, write down all of the stressful things, put that piece of paper at home, in your car, or in your gym bag, and commit to not thinking about it again until after practice. Sometimes it helps just to get it all out rather than have a to-do list swirling around in your head while trying to focus on practice.

Skill #2: Cognitive Reframing

Cognitive reframing, or positive self-talk, is a method of altering your internal monologue from negative to positive. Keys of cognitive reframing are:

- Adverse events as challenges
- Realistic optimism > pessimism
- Focus on the present and things under your control
- Process > outcomes
- Performance /= self-worth

Someone with a negative internal monologue will be quick to expect the worst, with small setbacks turning into catastrophes, overgeneralize by thinking that small errors mean outsized consequences in performance, frame events in very rigid and black-and-white terms, and hold irrational beliefs of what is expected of themselves by others.

The ABC Model of cognitive reframing provides a method to turn adverse events into challenges and move your self-talk in a more positive direction.

A: Activating Event

- This is the trigger for stress and negative thoughts. Let's use missing your goal on a 2k test as the activating event.
B: Beliefs

- Someone with negative beliefs will view the missed goal as evidence that they are no good, that they should just quit, that they let their teammates down, that they'll probably never make the A boat.
- Someone with positive beliefs will view the missed goal as a challenge for the next test, will identify mistakes and learn what they can improve on next time, and will remember that their worth as a person and a rower is about more than just the time of that one 2k test.

C: Consequences (Emotional and Behavioral)

- Emotional consequences of negative beliefs: stress/anxiety about future tests, depression about self-worth
- Behavioral consequences of negative beliefs: disruptive behavior such as withdrawing socially from teammates, skipping workouts or missing practice due to feeling guilty about letting teammates down, irritable with girlfriend/boyfriend in the home.

- Emotional consequences of positive beliefs: challenge/excitement
- Behavioral consequences of positive beliefs: Positive motivation, confidence from learning mistakes, better effort at practice

Give it a shot and write out your own ABC Model based on a relevant activating event.

Coxswains, often you ARE the source of cognitive reframing for your rowers. You have the power of the headset, so use it! If someone catches a crab in a race, or you're down by a length and slipping further, or a boat is walking on you, how you respond to that has a huge effect on your rowers and how they'll process the adverse event. Write out a couple possible activating events for negative rowers and come up with what you would do or say in the different situations. It WILL happen at some point!
Self-confidence is another trait of athletes that everyone agrees is necessary, but few provide opportunities to intentionally practice and improve one's self-confidence. Research and experience back up the claim that athletes with a higher level of realistic self-confidence perform better than those whose confidence is too high or too low.

Just like with arousal, there is an optimal zone of self-confidence. Athletes with optimal self-confidence will have lower mental anxiety, higher intrinsic motivation, and higher concentration, all for a positive effect on performance. Athletes with low self-confidence will have higher mental anxiety, lower intrinsic motivation, and lower concentration for a negative effect on performance. Athletes with unrealistically high confidence, or over-confidence, often rest on this and become complacent about their own need for improvement, or they are cocky and brash and at-odds with their teammates and coaches.

**Skill #1: Personal Hall of Fame**

The first skill for improving self-confidence is to put together your own personal Hall of Fame. It is easy to forget all of your accomplishments over a career, even across multiple sports, and writing them down in a Hall of Fame helps you remember and build upon them. This will improve self-confidence by reminding you of your accomplishments in moments of self-doubt or lapses in self-confidence. It is only important that these accomplishments are meaningful to you, so don't worry about other standards or what others might think. Keep your Hall of Fame updated as you add more accomplishments!

**Skill #2: Imagery**

Imagery, or visualization, is a way to vicariously experience success and develop confidence. In imagery, you form or rehearse a mental idea of how to perform or practice a skill. Research shows this to be effective at improving performance in that
skill, even without physical practice. The goal of imagery is for you to feel as though you've already performed the skill or been exposed to the situation when you do it in reality. Let's use race day as an example of how to do imagery.

1. Set the stage. Begin with breakfast, the regatta area, and launching, before you get to the race itself.
2. Use vividness and detail. Every step of the scene should use as much detail as you can pack in to make it really feel like you're actually there.
3. Situation and response. Practice imagery from numerous perspectives and situations. Does your start go well? Does another boat jump out to an early lead? Are there false starts? Are you up or down at the 1000m mark? Are you walking on a boat during the sprint or holding someone off?
4. Internal and external point-of-view. What are you seeing from your own view? What would someone see if they were watching you from the side or above? Some athletes will be more comfortable visualizing from an internal view, others external. Both ways work.
5. Props. What will you see on race day that you can use in your imagery? Red buoys marking meter points and the sprint is a good starting point.

You can use imagery in practicing a certain skill too, like attaining correct body angle on the recovery. Use the same list above to guide your practice.

Using imagery may feel silly at first and may take a few tries to really feel like you've gotten benefit from it, but it is a powerful self-confidence and performance booster when done consistently and rigorously. Try setting aside just 5 minutes the night before a practice to do imagery for one thing in the next day's practice. It can be performance oriented (eg. for a sprint practice or erg practice) or process oriented (eg. a technical variable).
Like a boogeyman, injury is something that many athletes don't like to talk about for fear that acknowledging the very real risk of injury in competitive sport will make it more likely to occur. However, one of the worst things that an athlete can do with a negative event is make it more mysterious by not talking about it.

Here are my core tenets of injury prevention:

1. Understand your sport, its injury risks, and safe training practices.
2. Learn how to prevent those injuries and then take action to do so.
3. Learn how to lift correctly to avoid compromising positions, then strength train to prevent imbalance injuries and teach correct motor patterns.
4. Stick to a regimen of warming up, cooling down, and stretching and mobility work to make sure your body is prepared for training and competition.
5. Hydrate and eat well to give your body the fuel and nutrients it needs to sustain hard training and achieve excellent performance.
6. Know your body and be honest with yourself. Know when to push and when to hold back in training to avoid sickness, injury, and over training.

While freak accidents do occur, the vast majority of sports injuries can be traced back to failure to adhere to those six tenets. Think of when you've been injured—were you consistently practicing all six at the time? [StrengthCoachWill.com, "Stay Positive to Beat the Injury Blues"]

The reason I list these is that a big part of psych of injury is controlling what you can control and trying to minimize anxiety about uncontrollable factors. There is plenty to work on in the above 6 tenets that is 100% under your control and does a great part in reducing risk of injury. Rather than give you things that you shouldn't think about, this list provides you things you should think about and take action on instead. Now onto the mental skills...
Skill #1: Healing Imagery

If you do experience an injury, the imagery skills that we just discussed in the last chapter can become highly useful for the purposes of healing. Healing imagery is supported by research to help injured athletes deal with pain resulting from injuries, assist athletes in eliminating counterproductive thoughts, increase rehab motivation and therefore adherence and likelihood of success, and prepare athletes for return from injury to their sport and performance.

Healing imagery involves imagining the injured body part heal, for example visualizing knots soothed out of muscles or bones reforming. Research suggests that this will be most effective if the athlete understands their imagery very well, which we know from the previous chapter to help with creating vividness and detail for their imagery. Learn what the injured structures are, what the healing process is like, what step of the healing process you are at in your rehab, and what the structure should look like when healed. Set aside brief intervals at first, 2-5 minutes, to go through healing imagery before moving up to longer sessions if that is helpful for you.

Skill #2: Positive Self-Talk

Positive self-talk is similar to cognitive reframing in that it is a method to change your inner monologue or narrative to positive, rather than negative. Remember, situations themselves are not inherently stressful or inherently negative, but our perceptions of those situations can make them become so. If you can interpret adverse events as challenges and maintain realistic optimism at other times rather than pessimism, research positively correlates that with better performance. This is also another good example of life skills crossing over from sport!

Specifically for injury, positive self-talk is suggested to improve recovery time and more positive athletes recovered faster from injury than athletes with a more negative mindset.

Many athletes will struggle returning from injury to not think about their injury or pain resulting from it, particularly if the injury occurred in a specific sport motion. This comes back to it being difficult to NOT think about something, so the key here is to think about something else instead. This is where positive self-talk comes in, to give yourself something positive to focus on to help block out negative thoughts around your injury.

Techniques of positive self-talk include mantras, phrases you can repeat to yourself that have to do with your confidence in returning from injury. "I'm ready."
Another technique is thought-stopping, which involves blocking negative thought when they occur. Make yourself aware of your negative thoughts by recording the number of times they occur. One way to do this is to transfer a paperclip from your right pocket to the other when you have a negative thought. Count how many are in your left pocket at the end of the day. Are you surprised? Once you have a baseline, develop a thought-stopping word or another trigger like snapping your fingers you can use to block the negative thought. Replace the negative thought with your positive cue word or mantra. Over time, this will decrease your negative thoughts and increase your positive thoughts.
Here are the short notes for each section as a quick reference when putting together your own personal MST program.

1. Motivation

Goal-Setting: increases motivation by making goals relevant to you and setting you on the path to intrinsically motivating achievements

- SMART goals
- Performance and process goals > outcome goals
- Learn and reflect

Pre-Practice/Race Routines: increase motivation by improving consistency and identity as an athlete

- Dedicate time to active recovery
- Preview practice/race plan
- Performance imagery
- Music

2. Energy Management

Energization: Psych yourself up to your optimal zone of arousal

- Breathing
- Cue words
- Imagery
- Music

Relaxation: Calm yourself down out of the psych-out zone

- Total relaxation vs. rapid relaxation
- Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
3. Attention

Refocus Routines: improve attention by clearing your mind and regaining focus after an error or momentary lapse in attention

- Find something you can do in the boat while moving as well as while resting between pieces

Performance Mantra: use trigger words to refocus yourself

- Use a mantra or a method of stroke counting

4. Stress Management

Get a Clear Picture: improves stress management by increasing self-awareness and identifying true causes of stress

- Write things down going on outside of practice and how you’re feeling

Cognitive Reframing: alter your internal monologue to more positive and turn adverse events into challenges

- ABC model

5. Self-Confidence

Personal Hall of Fame: improves self-confidence by highlighting past achievements

- Focus on achievements meaningful to you
- Update it as you go

Imagery: improves self-confidence by vicariously experiencing positive situations and success

- Set the stage
- Be vivid and detailed
- Use situation and response
- Look from an internal and external POV
- Use props

6. Psych of Injury
Healing Imagery: can accelerate recovery by helping deal with pain, minimize negative thoughts, increase rehab motivation, and prepare for return to sport

- Learn about your injury, its cause, the healing process, and what it will look like when healed

Positive Self-Talk: improve recovery time from injury

- Find something you can think about rather than NOT thinking about your injury
  - Mantras
  - Thought-stopping

The Strength Coach Roundtable (2016). Performance Psychology for Rowing featuring Sara Hendershot-Lombardi. Available from https://www.rowperfect.co.uk/strength-coach-roundt...
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