Psychological skills

C.5 · SL and HL

Swimming blind

> Calm under pressure is a trained skill.

- Beijing 2008, Phelps's goggles filled with water.
- He counted strokes, as rehearsed, and won in a world record.
- This unit: PST $\rightarrow$ goals $\rightarrow$ **imagery** $\rightarrow$ **self-talk** $\rightarrow$ relaxation $\rightarrow$ focus.

Skills and techniques

Skill

The quality wanted.

Confidence, **concentration**.

Technique

The method used.

Imagery, **goal setting**.

A performance profile

Quality	**Ideal, current, gap**
Concentration between points	9, 5, gap 4
Confidence on second serve	8, 4, gap 4
Motivation in training	8, 7, gap 1

Does PST work?

> Improvement that starts only when each athlete's intervention starts is strong evidence.

- Baseline first, then the intervention.
- Questionnaires record what people report.

Three types of goal



- Goals direct attention, raise effort and persistence.
- Combine all three types.

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SMART goals

1. **Vague.** I want to get better at swimming
2. **SMART.** 100 m from 68.0 to 66.0 s in 8 weeks
3. **Steps.** Test every 2 weeks, about 0.5 s each

Decision

Challenging but possible

Imagery

Internal

First person.

Feel timing and rhythm.

External

Third person, like video.

Check body shape.

PETTLEP

Letter	Penalty-taker example
Physical	In boots, holding the ball
Environment	Stadium noise
Task and timing	Own run-up, real time
Learning	Update as skill grows
Emotion and perspective	Feel pressure; internal view

Why imagery may work

Psychoneuromuscular

Tiny muscle activity.

Strengthens the motor programme.

Symbolic learning

Understand the sequence.

Best for thinking tasks.

Self-talk

Instructional

High elbow, watch the ball.

Precise skills.

Motivational

Keep pushing.

Strength and endurance.

Changing negative thoughts

Negative **self-talk** lowers confidence and raises anxiety.

- **Thought stopping**, a trigger, then a planned statement.
- **Reframing**, "I'm nervous" becomes "I'm ready".

Matching the technique

Technique	Type
Breathing, 4 s in, 6 s out	Somatic
Progressive muscle relaxation	Somatic
Biofeedback	Somatic
Mindfulness	Cognitive

Check: psych-up

Your turn

Which strategy raises arousal for a flat sprinter?

A. Progressive muscle relaxation
B. Fast, energising music
C. Slow breathing, long breath out
D. Mindfulness meditation

Attentional styles

	external	*internal*
broad	**Broad external** assess the situation: a midfielder scanning for a pass	**Broad internal** analyse and plan: choosing tactics at half-time
narrow	**Narrow external** focus on one target: looking at the rim for a free throw	**Narrow internal** rehearse or calm: imagining the high-jump run-up

- Width, broad or narrow; direction, external or internal.
- Good performers shift between styles.

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Pre-performance routines

> A routine blocks distractions, sets arousal and recalls the feel of the skill.

- Wilkinson used the same steps before every kick.
- A routine has a purpose; a superstition does not.

Choking

Choking is a sudden, large fall in performance under pressure.

- Anxiety makes experts think about automatic skills.
- Routines, process goals and one external cue help.

Exam tips

> Separate the skill from the technique used to develop it.

- Give SMART goals with a number and a deadline.
- Match technique to task and to type of anxiety.
- Use Nideffer's labels with examples.

Check yourself

Try these

Rewrite "I want to be a better basketball player" as a SMART goal.

Apply PETTLEP to a swimmer before a 100 m race.

Explain how a routine helps a free throw under pressure.