Psychological skills

C.5 goals, psychological skills and programme evaluation

Results and explanations

A dated result does not isolate its psychological cause.

- Phelps: Beijing 2008, 200 m butterfly, 1:52.03.
- Fitness, technique, experience and preparation can contribute.
- Use suitable comparisons before assigning a causal explanation.

Skills and techniques

> A skill is the quality; a technique is a method.

- Confidence and **concentration** are skills.
- A goal or relevant **self-talk** cue is a technique.
- Education $\rightarrow$ acquisition $\rightarrow$ practice and review.

A performance profile

Quality	Ideal / current / gap
Concentration	9 / 5 / 4
Confidence	8 / 4 / 4
Motivation	8 / 7 / 1

Choose a useful outcome

> A smaller reported gap does not by itself prove a skill improved.

- Discuss task importance, wishes and available resources.
- Use comparable performance and experience measures.
- One classroom profile does not diagnose a condition.

Does PST cause the change?

Repeated baseline and staggered starts strengthen inference, with limits.

- Record trends, variability and implementation.
- Training, expectancy and changed scoring may contribute.
- Compare suitable conditions and follow up.

Three types of goal

Process Technique or strategy	Relax shoulders
Performance Personal standard	1500 m under 4:20
Outcome Result against others	Win the final

Different targets; none guarantees control or benefit.

> Classify the target; no type guarantees full control.

Attention and motivation

> The same target need not prompt the same response.

- Goals may direct attention, effort, persistence and strategy.
- Fear of failure or too many cues may hinder engagement.
- Discuss achievement motivation and the actual situation.

SMART is a checklist

> A number and deadline do not establish feasibility.

- Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.
- Agree resources, feedback and review with the athlete.
- Adjust when evidence or circumstances change.

A swimming plan

1. **Proposed.** 68.0 to 66.0 s in eight weeks
2. **Intervals.** Four two-week intervals: $2.0 / 4 = 0.5$ s
3. **Targets.** 67.5, 67.0, 66.5, 66.0 s

Decision

Invented planning arithmetic; progress need not be linear.

A running plan

1. **Proposed.** 58.0 to 56.0 s in ten weeks
2. **Intervals.** Five checks: $2.0 / 5 = 0.4$ s per interval
3. **Relative.** $2 / 58 \times 100 = 3.448\ldots$ % time reduction

Decision

58.0 s is the reference; this is not a speed percentage.

Percentage points and relative change

1. **Proposed.** Free-throw success: 60% to 70%
2. **Points.** $70 - 60 = 10$ percentage points
3. **Relative.** $10 \,/\, 60 \times 100 = 16.666\ldots$ % increase

Decision

Compare like tasks, scoring and sufficient attempts.

Self-talk with a purpose

Choose a manageable cue and evaluate its use.

- Instructional: a relevant technical or attentional action.
- Motivational: encouragement or effort.
- Athletes in any sport may need either function.

An accurate reframe

> One missed penalty does not determine the next action.

- Notice the thought and redirect to an agreed cue.
- Do not invent an excuse or prescribe painful triggers.
- A thought can recur without meaning the athlete failed.

Regulation is context dependent

> A classroom category does not prescribe clinical treatment.

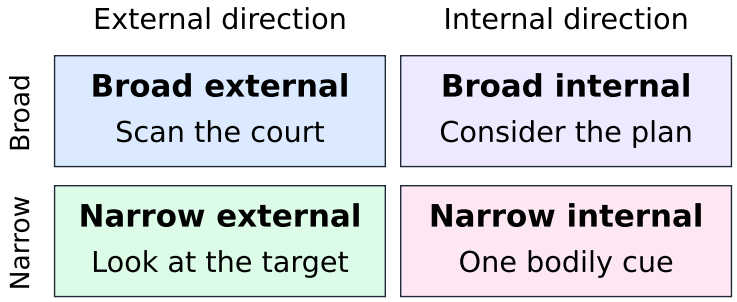
- Cognitive and bodily experiences interact.
- Use suitable familiar voluntary methods; avoid forced breathing.
- A changed pulse alone does not prove better performance.

Psych-up without a fixed optimum

> More activation is not automatically better.

- Consider recovery, task, experience and actual demands.
- Familiar music, ordinary warm-up or a cue may suit some athletes.
- Do not prescribe rapid short breaths or infer an optimum from a sport label.

Attention changes with the task



Shift attention with the task; these are examples.

These are example attentional states, not fixed athlete types.

A flexible routine

A routine gives attention a useful sequence; it does not guarantee a score.

- Choose task-relevant steps and practise them.
- Adapt to interruptions, rules and safety.
- An exact ritual is not required for success.

One miss does not diagnose choking

Distraction and excessive monitoring are proposed explanations.

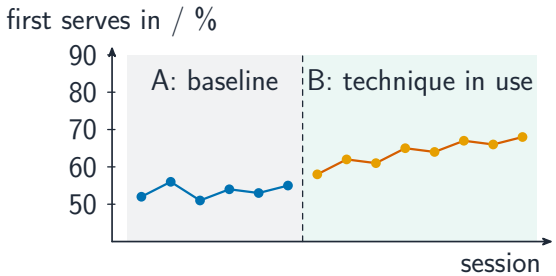
- Ordinary variability, fatigue, technique and injury also matter.
- Evaluate process cues or routines as possible supports.
- Avoid guaranteed prevention claims.

Evaluate and follow up

> A useful programme must also be feasible and acceptable.

- Agree the intended outcome and protect voluntary participation.
- Measure repeatedly and record adherence and other training.
- Use comparison and follow-up to examine alternatives.

A single-case A–B design



judge the change against baseline trend and spread; training, expectancy and maturation still compete

A stable baseline makes the change more convincing

Exam tips

> Classify, calculate and evaluate the actual claim.

- State goal reference, conditions and limits of control.
- Distinguish percentage points from relative change.
- Separate a framework, an observed change and a causal explanation.

Check yourself

Try these

Classify a placing, personal time and movement cue.

Explain why a largest profile gap is not automatically the priority.

Evaluate a routine using repeated comparable measurements.