



## What is Sport Psychology By Deborah Sharp Molchan, MS

What exactly is sport psychology? Sport psychology is the practice of learning tools and techniques that increase the ability for athletes to perform at their best. It is the science of teaching athletes how to clear and calm their mind, to manage emotions, to increase the enjoyment of your sport, and to provide tools to improve confidence and composure under pressure. All of these skills can be taught. These critical skills are taught to Olympic and professional athletes by sport psychologist with much success. Once only available for elite and professional athletes, now athletes can learn the tools professionals use. These mental training tools are taught to athletes by licensed psychologist Deborah Sharp Molchan, MS. Don't hesitate to call for your assessment; your athletic future is now.

Meditation can also improve concentration and performance. Dr. Peter Halberl, a sport psychologist with The United States Olympic Committee works with Olympic athletes teaching them mental skills for athletic performance, including meditation techniques. The athlete develops increased concentration and the ability to detach from negative thoughts, that contaminate performance, through meditation.

- Tiger Woods uses these techniques sustain his mental focus. He stated to Jimmy Roberts of NBC Sports, "...I think the guys who are really controlling their emotions are going to win."
- In the 1988 Seoul Summer Games, Olympic diver Greg Louganis hit his head on the diving board while performing a difficult dive during the 3 meter final. Louganis head was gushing with blood, a situation that could greatly distract an athlete. He chose to listen to his hypnosis tape while staff treated his wound. Giving testimony to the power of mental training and focus, Greg went out to score a perfect dive the second time and earned the gold medal.

Athletes also use visualization techniques. Through visualization the athlete creates images that improve performance. Visualization puts the athlete through the physical experience before going on the field. Visualization primes the muscles and conditions the brain to assist the athlete to perform their best.

- John Claude Kiley, the three times Olympic champion alpine skier had one of his best performances in a World Cup Race after a long injury. He practiced everyday of his injury using visualization techniques. With very little physical practice he won the World Cup.
- Colonel Hull, a POW, practiced playing eighteen holes of golf everyday in his head for five years while imprisoned. When he was asked the first thing he wanted to do after returning from the POW camp, he stated. "Play Augusta." He shot the best round of golf in his life after spending five years in physical hardship. When asked how it was possible he played such great golf he responded, "I played eighteen holes everyday for five years."

Biofeedback is also beneficial to athletes. Biofeedback programs are now available to help teach athletes relax and focus to achieve their optimum performance. Biofeedback is being used with significant effectiveness to improve athletic performance for both amateur and professional athletes. Biofeedback will assist the athlete to regulate the power of their emotions, to learn how to activate positive emotions to open the door to the Zone of Peak Performance.

- Biofeedback is being used extensively in the professional golfing community, and by a number of U.S. Olympic Ski Team Coaches. The ski team coaches require skiers to attain a certain level of heart rhythm coherence before heading down the slope.
- Canadian sport psychologist working with Olympic swimmers using biofeedback states swimmers were able to cut 0.2 seconds off their swim times after learning how to sustain coherence. A Canadian female gold medalist swimmer set a world record after training with biofeedback.

Biofeedback mental training, in addition to all of the above techniques, is taught to athletes by licensed psychologist Deborah Sharp Molchan, MS. What we learn in sport can be applied to life. In fact the courage, determination and development of mental skills can help one achieve excellence in their life in all arenas. Why wait, your athletic future starts now. Learn tools that will enhance your athletic performance and improve your life!