Supporting the psychological needs of orienteers

Sports psychology
The scientific study of behaviour. The behaviour is improved / altered so that performance is improved.

Aims

• To review essential components of orienteering psychology: their measurement and development in athletes.

• To apply concepts of needs analysis, psychological skills training and programme design.

• To discuss and practically evaluate methods of psychological testing and training within orienteering.
Overview

• Review pre-course tasks.

• Anxiety, nerves and arousal control.

• Imagery (uses, effectiveness, hints and tips).

• Self-talk (uses, effectiveness, hints and tips).

P4: Relevance

1. What psychological factors did you feel impacted orienteering performance? Were there any controversial choices / ideas?

2. Once the fitness, technique and tactics are in place (e.g. by elite level), how important did you feel psychology is in determining success / failure?

3. How important is psychology in the performance (and development) of participation athletes / juniors?

4. How well do these figures match with the amount of time / effort devoted to psychology in training?
1. What was your general impression of each analysis technique? How practical are they? And how accurate?

2. What other choices are available to a coach wishing to assess or access someone’s psychological state?

3. Which techniques do you currently use?

4. Which techniques would you consider introducing?

5. Is there an ‘ideal’ approach to psychological needs analysis?

Anxiety

- Numerous studies, stories and experiences all link anxiety to negative effects on performance.

- But it does not have to be that way – even viewing nerves as helpful (‘a good sign’) seems to lead to improved outcomes.

- At least 2 types can be teased out: cognitive (worry/dwelling) and somatic (bodily jitters/nerves).

- It can also vary in terms of duration/time from moments (‘arousal’) to weeks/months (‘stress’).

Q: How would you detect anxiety in an athlete?
Anxiety

A number of techniques are available to overcome / reduce anxiety, but the devil is in the detail…

– Self-talk and ‘reframing’.
– Imagery (either of success or happy/relaxing images).
– Breathing techniques.
– “Progressive muscular relaxation” (PMR).
– Talk it out…?

The secret is making sure you match the intervention to the ‘symptoms’.

OPS Optimal performance state

How does this impact on your athletes motivation & skill development?
How does this impact on your coaching?
Self-talk

A **really** common intervention in sport psychology.

- What could it be used for?
- Why (how) do you think it works?
- How could you ‘measure’ an athlete’s self-talk?

Q. **How would you go about changing an athlete’s self-talk?**

Mental imagery

- Another **really** common intervention in sport psychology.
- Should incorporate more than just ‘visualisation’ – need to include feelings, emotions, etc.
- What could it be used for?
- Why (how) do you think it works?
- How could you ‘measure’ an athlete mental imagery?
- How would you go about changing the athlete mental imagery?
Imagery guidance

The PETTLEP model was designed to offer guidance in making imagery more effective.

- **P** – physical – stimuli including clothes, noises, impacts…
- **E** – environment – specify the exact surroundings.
- **T** – task – imagine the task as accurately and correctly as possible.
- **T** – timing – can slow down or speed up, but real-time seems best.
- **L** – learning – remember to incorporate recent improvements.
- **E** – emotions – try to capture the emotions (strong in memory).
- **P** – perspective – can be ‘internal’ or ‘external’ – pros and cons to each.

Preparation for racing

- Allow the athlete to take ownership – make things happen for themselves.
- Reactive thinking vs. Proactive thinking.
- What if?
  **Task**: Time line for night before race to start line.
  - SOL, 2 hours drive to car park. Need to collect Emit.
  - 1.5km, 150m climb to start (single start); start time is 11:13.

**Primacy** and **Recency**:

- Last thing you do / practise / warm-up is the first thing you do in competition.
Boost mental toughness

Make the commitment

Build confidence

Know the purpose of each training session

The race is a research project

Control the controllables

Pre-race simulations

Think through the tough patches

Race prepared

Thorough race analysis

Summary

• Consider the psychological surface ‘scratched’.

• Key readings are provided, and you are also sensitised to key issues, but there are no definitive answers.

• You will also need to try these things for yourself:
  a) to see if they work, when and who with.
  b) what factors maximise their chances of working.

• Onus now falls on you to keep exploring.
Anxiety readings


Self-talk readings

