

9 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MINDSET FOR SPORT

1. Preparation builds confidence.

We all know that being fit and mentally prepared is crucial to your performance. It's the difference between success and failure. Everything you do before competition will fuel your confidence. The hours of training and days in the gym are all emotional deposits in which we can cash in when the need arises.



TOP TIP: Plan well in advance to the event. Produce a competition plan which outlines all the different strategies, tactics and event details. Be precise with your objectives for each part, stage or behaviour. Once the plans are in place it's time to visualise and run these plans through your mind's eye. The more vivid the mental rehearsal the better. Learn these techniques and more on our 2 day- NLP sports certificate. Check out our website for more information.

2. Practice the right way!



It is our ability to learn, practice and develop a skill that will enable us to perform at the highest level. Research has found that it's not the number of years you have performed the skill or activity. It is the number of years "deliberate practice" that makes the difference.

So what is "deliberate practice"? Deliberate practice requires complete concentration and focus. Routine practise or playing on auto-pilot is not enough. A conscious practice is essential with a sharp focus on what's working, what's not and why? Whether you play sport, dance or play an instrument. A person must have an awareness of their body position and movements. They must have an ability to make fine adjustments according to the results they are getting. This requires a high level of concentration and conscious awareness. Elite performers often claim that it is this that is the most challenging part. Top athletes and sports people find this challenging. They can only maintain that level of concentration for around an hour. This is why most elite sports people train no more than 5 hours a day.

Anders Ericsson a psychologist coined the phrase "deliberate practice". He discovered that there is no correlation between the time in the profession and performance levels. It is the number of years of deliberate perfected practice that count. Hope for us all then. It's time to start that "deliberate practice."

TOPTIP: When practicing a skill or activity focus on one specific component of the skill. For example, a tennis player might have an intention of 'Staying low and keeping the head motionless in a practice. This is important in producing a consistent tennis forehand swing path. So the next time you are practicing have an intention or a goal. Keep your focus and awareness high and create that "deliberate practice" !

3. Have a mindset for success.



Any top performer has the mindset for success. They have certain beliefs that enable them to learn, develop and make progress. It was not too long ago that scientist thought that we

were all born with a certain level of intelligence. People believed that we had a fixed capacity for learning. These days' people are much more aware that it's not down to our genes.

Carol Dweck a psychologist at Standford University has conducted many studies. She found that it is the beliefs we carry about ourselves that inhibit our progress and abilities. She discovered that people who had a fixed mindset didn't have much persistence. They would give up to soon. In fact, by doing that they have created a self-fulfilling prophecy. They proved to themselves that they couldn't do something.

A "fixed mindset" assumes that our character, intelligence, and creative ability are static givens which we can't change in any meaningful way. A "growth mindset" thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of unintelligence. Instead a growth mindset sees failure as an opportunity to learn, stretch and grow.

Sports people differ in their initial talents, interests, abilities and temperaments. Everyone can change and grow through application and effort.

One of the most important factors is how a person reacts to failure. Fearing failure too much can lead to inhibited sporting performance and cause unnecessary anxiety.

TOP TIP: Enhance your growth mindset by doing the following. First take on board this belief and make it stick. "There's no such thing as failure only feedback and learning." Just by keeping this belief in the forefront of your mind will enhance your persistence. It will empower you to take more risks and give you opportunities to grow

An activity which demonstrates this is juggling. When anyone first learns how to juggle it can seem daunting. Some people may think that they would be unable to perfect the skill and would give up after a few attempts. Anyone who can now juggle knows that they would have had to fail over 100 times before they could perfect it. You will set yourself up for success if you react well to failure, practice and persevere. If you can't juggle yet have a go. Notice your internal dialogue when you drop a ball. What's your reaction?

4. Prepare for adversity

Athletes and players learn how to cope with challenging situations through experience. If a challenging situation is more familiar they are able to keep their mind on the job. If you have not experienced much adversity when playing your sport. Then you'll have to think about the possible challenges and unpredictable events that may occur. To do this run through your event competition in your mind. Ask yourself the following questions, what might go wrong? What key challenges may I experience during competition? Once you



have highlighted some key challenges, come up with strategies and solutions to the problems.

Once you have the solutions you can use visualisation techniques to practice any scenario. The good thing is that the mind cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined. By running these scenarios through your mind and rehearsing positive outcomes to the problems. You are preparing yourself when it really happens.

Dr. Biasiotto at the University of Chicago split basketball players into three groups. He tested each group on how many free throws they could make.

After this, he had the first group practice free throws every day for an hour. The second group just visualized themselves making free throws. The third group did nothing. As you might expect, the third group did not improve. The first group improved by 24%. What was really fascinating was that the group that visualised, improved by 23%. What a difference, all done without even touching a ball!

TOPTIP: Identify a situation in a game or event that you would like to rehearse. This could be shooting, passing or hitting a backhand shot. Any element of your sport where accuracy is important. Now close your eyes and run through a short film of you successfully achieving your outcome. The visualisation should be done as if seeing through your own eyes. Run through this mental rehearsal everyday leading up to a competition.

When doing the visualisation, it is best to use all your senses. (see, hear, feel, smell and even taste). Our 2-day sports diploma provides individuals with the skills necessary to develop mental rehearsal and visualisation.

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5. Control the Controllable

In everyday life we can never entirely feel in control of what happens around us. There are so many unpredictable events that can affect people from losing our job to catching a virus. At every moment we are vulnerable to what life throws at us. One of the most reassuring aspects of sport is that it offers temporary sanctuary from the chaos of everyday life. Sport provides us the opportunity to control our outcomes. Within the rules and boundaries of sport. If we are well prepared, chances are we can cope with anything that comes our way.

When we reach mastery and are able to be in the zone; reach flow, then we get a sense of calmness, relaxation and power over our environment. We feel in total control and can almost influence every outcome. But, in reality we are never entirely in control, even in the most intense flow states. Flow is a state achieved when our skills are in balance with the challenges put against us. If the challenges are too high, then we can thrust out of flow and feel overwhelmed and out of our depth. What is interesting and important is that we are aware that in principle we have the possibility of being in control.

In principle, control in sport is not about the opponents or environmental factors. It's about learning to master and discipline the wandering mind, strong emotions and wavering motivation. Sport creates the possibility of mastering control over oneself.

TOOPTIP: Create a control check list of all the factors for optimal performance. State if they are under your control or not. Once complete focus on the things that are under your control. In most sports there are many factors that need our attention. e.g. physical fitness, appropriate diet, mental skills, technical factors, equipment and course preparation. What our competitors and officials do is largely out of our control. Weather and pitch conditions are also out of our control. Some people can easily get into the mindset cycle of blaming the referee or conditions of play. This focus of attention takes a sports person away from what they can control. What they can control is their and behaviour. Next time you play put your energy and focus on the controllables.

6. Why versus how?

In times of need use a different question. Any negative experience you encounter can challenge your mindset and approach. We can often get into a negative cycle of self-pity and negative self-talk. The word 'why' is often associated with the negative. Why does this happen to me? Why should I? Or why now? Whereas the how questions often results in finding a solution. How can I? How do I? How do we? Here are some typical negative responses that sports men and women may have with some possible alternatives.



Questions provide the key to unlocking our unlimited potential.
Anthony Robbins

WHY?	HOW?
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Why do I always lose the tie break to him?	How can I change my strategy next time to beat him?
Why do I always lose when I play at this ground?	How can I best prepare next time I play at this ground?
Why do I struggle in these conditions	How can I make the best of the conditions I am dealt with?
Why do people do that?	How can I change my team's approach?
Why is it always me?	How can I stop that happening again to me?
Why am I always out of position when the ball breaks free?	How can I interpret the game better? How can I predict where the ball might go?

Isn't it powerful yet simple? Just by changing your response from a why to a how question you can change the way you feel for the better.

Your brain is powerful thing. It contains over a 100 billion neurons and it is capable of coping with trillions of thoughts. Choosing an alternative question can enhance your feelings and thus get you better results.

So next time you respond to a negative situation ask a different question. Here are some more examples that you may want to change when preparing for your sport.

I haven't got the time

How can I find some time?

This sprint training is boring more interesting?

What can I do to make this

I don't know how we would do that? knows?

Who do I know who

By changing your internal dialogue, you can change your thought patterns. This will not only get you better results, but will exercise and expand other areas of the brain. It will give you greater mental flexibility in the future.

TOP TIP: When you reframe the question use your physiology at the same time. Looking up, smiling and raising your eyebrows will gain you intense clarity. Your brain even gets to work on the solution faster. To learn more about physiology and how it can impact your state and improve your chances of success attend our NLP practitioner course. The learning is in the doing.

7. Strike a pose.

I was recently watching the English Premier League. At full time I stayed to view and listen to the match analysis. The commentary team were discussing a player who was playing out of his normal position. The commentators recognised that during the later stages of the game. The players head and upper body dropped. The commentator explained that this was a result of the player being tired and unwilling to make those runs. When the clip was re-shown the physiology of the player was so distinct that you could almost hear his internal dialogue. "Oh no, do I have to.I don't enjoying playing this position." His physiology gave clues to what he was thinking and what mental state he was in.

We all have certain gestures that we display when we want to quit, get frustrated or fall into unresourceful states. Take a moment to identify what you do when you want to quit or go into an unresourceful state. Do you:-

Kick the ground	shake your head	shout/blame teammates
Throw things	say “no!”	complain to the officials
Pull your hair	look down	slap your forehead
Walk away	swear	grit your teeth
Hands up in despair	hands over eyes	pull shirt over head

Now what if you were to change that pattern and take a moment to consider what you do when you feel super successful/confident.

Puff your chest	make a fist	stand tall
Do a dance	punch the air	look up
Pout you lips	smile	say “yes
Both arms up in air	shout	nod your head

Replace any unwanted gestures with more positive one. By doing this you will be amazed at how you can change your emotional state. You’ll feel better faster and perform better.

So what does the science say?

Social psychologist Amy Cuddy revealed on a TED Global talk that by changing your physiology you can change your chemistry. If you sit or stand in a certain way for around 2 minutes. You can raise testosterone levels and lower the stress hormone cortisol. So by changing your physiology you can change your chemistry, change your state and influence the results you get.

Just think about the power poses that are exhibited in sport.

TOPTIP: Next time you catch yourself in an unresourceful state. Change it with your physiology. Create a power pose of your own to use whenever you need it. To enhance the feeling, you get anchor that feeling to the pose. Every time you feel successful and super-confident strike the pose. This will enhance the feelings and create a wonderful anchor for success.

During our NLP diploma and practitioner courses you can learn how to set your own resourceful anchors. For more information, take a look at our courses.

<http://www.peak-performance-training.com.au/>

8. Heal with your mind.

It is inevitable that a sports person will get injured at some point in their career. Making them unable physically to play their field of sport. Spending a long period away from their sport and in rehab can be a real challenge for most people. In fact, it is at this point I believe that a person is most vulnerable.

For a sports person who lives and breathes their sport it can knock their confidence and make them feel low. The least amount of time spent out of the game the better. But, what if you learned how to speed up the healing process?

Research suggests that maintaining a positive attitude and using mental skills. Contribute to a shorter rehabilitation. In fact, when Levleva and Orlick (1999) compared slow and fast healers, they found that the fast healers:

- took personal responsibility for healing
- had high desire and determination

- had more social support
- maintained a positive attitude
- used creative visualization
- were less fearful of re-injury upon return to full participation

In a well-controlled study of 30 people undergoing ACL reconstruction surgery. One third of the group received 10 sessions of training in relaxation and guided imagery. Each day they spent 15 minutes visualising a peaceful scene. Those that had practiced relaxation and mental imagery, had significantly more knee strength and less pain. Also when they returned to their sport they had fewer fears of the reoccurrence of that injury.

So what is imagery? Imagery is creating a mental likeness to something you would like to have occur in real life. It involves using all your senses to create or recreate an experience. Using imagery can:

- increase feelings of personal control
- break up the monotony of physical rehabilitation
- potentially enhance rate of healing

Although it may sound farfetched imagery can help speed up the healing process. Research has shown that cancer patients who use imagery gain many benefits. Patients who practiced healing imagery of their body fighting the cancer experienced the following.

- increased coping with therapy
- promoted involvement in self-care
- improved mood & quality of life



- increased sense of internal control
- improve immune response
- decreased post-op pain & anxiety
- shortened hospital stays
- decreased amount of pain meds
- lived longer

*Each of these benefits will assist individuals who are rehabilitating a sport or exercise injury

(Baider et al., 2001; Burns, 2001; Donaldson, 2000; Lambert, 1996; Omlor et al., 2000; Troesch et al., 1993)

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A client I worked with had a severe ACL injury. His physician told him he wouldn't play rugby again. I coached him for several weeks during his rehab. I took him through some guided imagery exercises as well as develop his mindset and belief system. After a lengthy time in rehab he went back to his

physician. The physician was amazed at his progress. He told my client that he would be one of the rare cases that actually would be able to play again.

How did this happen? Firstly, my client had a great physio and conditioning team with support from family and friends. He had a great mindset. He was persistent, listened to advice and had clear goals along the way. We will never know how much the guided imagery and coaching helped but one thing is for sure. It empowered my client and gave him other tools and techniques that he could use to aid his recovery and improve his mental state and well-being. Two years later I hear that not only is he playing rugby again, he is now playing professionally for Hong Kong. Now that's the power of the mind for you.

TOP TIP: There are many uses of creative imagery. Whatever your goals, you can create an image that you find helpful. Create your own healing image one that symbolizes recovery ask yourself the following

- o What images do you associate with injury and/or pain?
- o What images do you associate with being strong, mobile, or healthy?
- o What images remind you of healing?

Now these images can be silly and fun; remember that the image only needs to be meaningful to you.

Examples of Healing Images include:

- Broken bone: cement filling in a break in a bone
- Torn muscle: muscle fibres braiding together
- Bruised/swollen body part: “bad stuff” draining out of the body; use a colour for bad stuff going out and healing stuff going in.
- Injured ligaments: ligaments getting thicker and stronger or tight muscles lengthening, stretching



Here is an example I have used with clients to guide their imagination. Adapt it accordingly and enjoy the process.

Take a few deep breaths ... Concentrate on your breathing, feel the movements of your body ... Just relax, sink into the chair/couch

Now imagine your immune system in a way that appeals to you. My personal preference is to think of it as lots of light coloured jelly fish creatures, similar to how protective cells look.....notice there are hundreds and thousands as they swim strongly and purposefully towards the inner part of your knee.

Notice how you imagine the problem in your knee....you might see the ligaments and cartilage as tiny black globules.

Now in your mind...see the big light strong coloured jelly fish encapsulating and devouring the little black globules...

As you see the little black globules disappear now...you can imagine all the little black globules gone and the light jelly fish happily swimming and patrolling your blood stream.

Now take your awareness to your eyes and imagine a healthier you standing in front of you...

Notice how strong the healthier you look...

Notice how healthier you are, breath and smile. As you see that now, step into the healthier you. See through the eyes of the healthier you. Hear through the ears and notice how your knee feels strong and healthy...and how better you feel now.

When you are ready I want you to open your eyes and come back to now. As I count down from 5-1 open your eyes and bring your awareness back in the room.

Learn even more about how you can use your mind to help you reach your goals on our NLP practitioner.

9. The Power of Belief.

Throughout this e-book you would have realised the importance of beliefs and how they play a role in our results and successes. We could devote a whole book to beliefs, how they are created and how they impact our behaviours but for the purpose of this e-book I am going to keep it fairly brief.

Beliefs are formed throughout our life and especially when we are younger. They can be 'given to us' by our parents, siblings and other significant people in our lives. Here are some key points to note about beliefs.

- They can change over the course of someone's life
- They are not truths, they are our current best thinking about something
- They are generalisations about events in our past
- We may be consciously aware of them or not
- They can be empowering or dis empowering
- They impact on the behaviours and skills and abilities that we have

One of the most important factors that distinguishes the truly elite performers from the rest is self-belief. All champion sports people have bucket loads of it. Professional swimmers, sprinters, triathletes and footballers all stated that self-belief was the most important characteristic of mental toughness.



So the question is how can we develop it? Where does it come from?

According to sports psychologist Steve Sylvester. The factors that build self-belief are different for everyone. Yet notably it is primarily based on our past experiences and how the person feels about the people around them. Belief is also generated from knowing that everything has been done in preparation for the competition. Knowing you have done it in training and put in the hard graft for hours and hours, builds confidence and self-belief.

There are a few other types of belief that are worth mentioning. You can have beliefs about what causes something? For instance, a young player might have been told by their coach that they were too short and small for playing in centre midfield. The player then might have a belief that “I’ll never make it as a midfield player because I’m too small.” This would have an impact on the way the player performed in midfield during the game. It almost becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The word ‘*because*’ often indicates that there is a belief about cause. Beliefs about cause come from the filters of our experience. If you believe that X Causes Y, then your behaviour will be directed towards making X happen or stopping it from happening if it has negative consequences.

We can have beliefs about meaning. What do our experiences mean? What is important or necessary? What do the events and environmental factors mean? For example, a player might get substituted on a few occasions and the player then takes meaning from it. She might then believe “He substitutes me which means he doesn’t like me.” As you can imagine this belief filters the experience of the player. This would affect the relationship with the manager.



Robert Dilts internationally recognised as one of the foremost developers and trainers of Neuro-Linguistic Programming states. “Beliefs about meaning will result in behaviours congruent with the belief.”

Finally, beliefs about identity. Beliefs about identity include cause, meaning and the boundaries we have according to our identity. What personal limits do we have? What do your behaviours mean? Our identity beliefs are often hard to find as they are often not conscious to us. Examples are “I am not worthy,” “I don’t deserve to succeed,” or “If I get what I want I will lose something.” When you change your identity beliefs it means you are going to be a different person somehow. This type of change work is best suited to a qualified NLP practitioner. It requires a high level of expertise. Being coached by someone who is an NLP practitioner can make a huge difference to the client.

Here's another example.

If a tennis player has an identity belief like “I don’t deserve success.” Then this will play out in their performance and behaviours. Resulting in them never quite achieving their full potential.

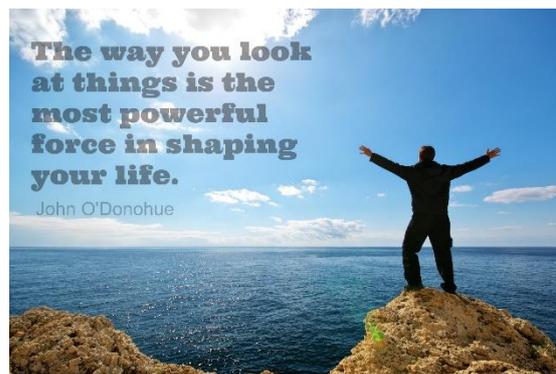
TOOPTIP: To change and update your beliefs, make a list of beliefs you hold which may hold you back. Write down the impact it would have if you were to change those beliefs. Knowing the impact of these limiting beliefs and the benefits of changing them will give you the motivation to make some changes. Here are a couple of simple belief changing techniques.

i) Counter Example

Beliefs are generalisations of some previous experiences. If someone has a limiting belief, you might provide them with a counter example in the context of their outcome. For example, if a player has the belief “I’ll never make it as a midfielder player because I’m too small.” You might give examples of world class midfielders like Andres Iniesta, Cesc Fabregas, Xavi. Take a look at Lionel Messi. He is evidence to counter this belief. Sometimes just one example will blow out the belief.

ii) Reframing

In NLP, the term “reframe” means to transform the meaning of something by putting another framework or context around it. It’s about turning a negative into a positive. A reframe can help us look at a situation or see something in a different perspective. Limiting beliefs can be flipped into more positive outlooks. It may or may not completely change the belief but it would make the person see something from a different perspective..



There are two main types of reframe ‘context’ reframes and ‘content’ or meaning reframes. As a coach or player you can ask yourself a few questions.

1. What am I doing that I have not noticed about the situation, if I looked at it differently would the problem be reduced or disappear?
2. What else could this situation or behaviour or experience mean. How can this lead to a positive outcome? (content reframe)

3. What is a different context when this behaviour, situation or experience would be useful or not an issue? (context reframe)

Here's example. I am sure you have come across sports people who have gotten upset if their manager/coach or teammates shouts at them to do better. This player may hold a belief like "my team-mate shouts at me, he doesn't like me/rate me."

A person could challenge this statement in a number of ways.

"I wish my team-mates showed more passion and commitment."

"At least your team-mates are competitive and want to win, mine don't seem to care."

"Would you rather he says nothing and not try to motivate you."

"He must have such belief in you and has really high expectations."

These are direct statements which you could use but you may want to come up with some more subtle challenges of your own.

Take each of your limiting beliefs that you identified earlier. Do a content and context reframe on them. Notice the changes it makes to your thinking.

We have covered just two ways that you can change or loosen beliefs. There are several more powerful NLP techniques to do this that are outside the scope of this e-book. NLP practitioners and Master practitioners are trained and experienced in identifying limiting beliefs. They would appropriately change any limiting beliefs that may be holding you back.



In this e-book we have covered a range of techniques and tools and touched on NLP. So what is NLP?

NLP, or Neuro-Linguistic Programming, is the art and science of excellence, derived from studying how top people in different fields obtain their outstanding results. NLP is about how we think, feel and act. It's about how we understand and communicate with ourselves and others. By modelling excellence in others and adopting new patterns of thinking and behaving we can perform at our peak.

Other definitions are

- The study of how the brain codes learning and experience.
- A model of how we receive, store and retrieve information.
- Neuro-Linguistic Programming is a model of interpersonal communication chiefly concerned with the relationship between successful patterns of behaviour and subjective experience.
- Dr Richard Bandler who is widely regarded as the Co-Founder of NLP defines NLP as '*an attitude and methodology that leaves behind a trail of techniques*'.

A more formal definition would look something like this:

Neuro: Our nervous system, brain/mind and how that interacts with the body.

Linguistic: The words and language we use. Language can be verbal and non verbal.

Programming: Is the habits of thought (often unconscious) that lead to habits of behaviour. By discovering these with NLP you can then decide whether they work well for you or lead you to be unhappy and unfulfilled. This places you in a great position of CHOICE about whether you would like to change them.



NLP can be applied in the following areas:

- ***Coaching, therapy and counselling*** to accelerate the changes with clients by looking at the processes that underlie a particular pattern, emotion or habit.
- ***Education and training*** to promote and accelerate learning and memory. NLP is also a valuable tool for teaching and design methods.
- ***Personal development*** to remove unresourceful emotions and patterns while promoting confidence and self-esteem.
- ***Business*** to enhance communication and negotiation skills.
- ***Sports*** to enhance performance.
- ***Parenting*** to assist in clear communication with children from the start.

If you are interested in learning more about NLP and how you can improve your sporting performance I have an online course you may be interested in. "NLP for Sport: How to train your mind for sporting success."

As you have downloaded this e-book I am offering you a **SPECIAL DISCOUNT OF 10% OFF**. Use the code below to access my course full of video content with useful tips and strategies.

10%OFF NLP4SPORT

I look forward to hearing from you should you have any questions or want to connect further.

Yours for sport.

Matt Beeston

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