

OLYMPIC THINKING

***PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY
COACHING***

***For
Peak Performance
In Business, Sports and Life***

**The 5 P's of Performance
Using Your Key Tools of the Trade**

Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter

Olympic Sports Psychologist

Performance Coach to CEO's and

Olympic Gold Medalists

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**Psychology Performance Coaching
for Professionals**

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**More Praise for Olympic Thinking...and
Sports Psychology Performance COACH CERTIFICATION:**

Online - <http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>

**“Dr. Dahlkoetter’s program helped me to become
an Olympian!”**

Stacy Dragila, Olympic Gold Medalist, Pole vault

“This is a must read! I highly recommend this book to everyone who is pursuing excellence and deeper meaning in any area of their lives. She has shown me powerful visualization techniques to improve my confidence and performance.”

Misty Hyman, Olympic gold medalist, 200-Meter butterfly

“We are all in the race of life. To win it, we need to know what the champions do and use their models. Read this compelling book. Allow Dr. JoAnn to show you how to have super health, super fitness, super success and a super life.”

**Mark Victor Hansen, Co-creator, #1 New York Times best
selling series *Chicken Soup for the Soul***

“*Your Performing Edge* has all of the ingredients for psychological fine tuning - the ultimate book for optimal mind-body performance. It's a great addition for myself and the athletes I teach.”

**Dave Scott, Six-time winner,
Hawaii Ironman Triathlon**

“*Your Performing Edge* is a compelling book. I'm convinced that mental training is as important to long term achievement and enjoyment in sports as the training of the heart and muscles.”

Jeff Galloway, Olympian, 10,000 meters

“Working with Dr. JoAnn as my personal coach has made all the difference in my mental toughness and inner strength and helped me to become an Olympian.”

Jana Lindsey, 2-Time U.S. Olympic Ski Team member

“Dr. JoAnn and I have shared the same stage as keynote speakers at national conventions. Her book is right on target! No matter your level of ability, this writing will offer you the crucial keys to perform your best in the game of life.”

**Derek Parra, Olympic Gold Medalist,
Speed Skating**

“A positive mental attitude is critical for performing well in sports, business, and life. This book will teach you the essential mind-body skills for doing your absolute best in every aspect of life.”

Alberto Salazar, Three-time winner, New York City Marathon

“The mind and body have to work as one, the body following the mind. *Your Performing Edge* will help you sharpen your mind.”

Picaboo Street, Olympic Gold Medalist, Downhill Skiing

“A goldmine of information...filled with essential tools of excellence.”

Dan O'Brien, Olympic Gold Medalist, Decathlon

“Dr. Dahlkoetter’s writing draws on a wealth of good illustrations both for motivation and for discovering your personal and athletic potential.”
Running Times Magazine, Jonathan Beverly, Editor

“Great athletes are made, not born. Dr. JoAnn’s book explains where the training is done...between the ears.”

**Marty Liquori, world’s #1 miler, NBC Olympics sports
commentator; producer of ESPN’s *Running and Racing***

“To make exercise a priority is an investment in your health, not an indulgence.”

Katherine Switzer, New York City marathon champion

“My work with Dr. Dahlkoetter was essential in helping me prepare for the Olympic kayaking team. Her book puts into words what I always strive toward when I train and compete. She knows what it takes to get the best out of ourselves and move ahead with our lives.”

Julia Sorzano, U.S. Olympic kayak team

“Dr. Dahlkoetter’s book provides an exceptionally thorough and well thought out approach to mental training for athletes of all ability levels.”

John K. Moore, D.C., C.C.N.,- Chiropractor for U.S. Olympic swimmers; Chairman, International College of Applied Kinesiology Sports Council

“I compliment Dr. Dahlkoetter on her efforts in producing such a meaningful work for the betterment of others. Her excellent credentials, provide the foundation to write with confidence and experience.”

Payton Jordan, 1968 Olympic track and field coach; former world record holder, 100 yards

“Dr. Dahlkoetter’s advice was critical in helping me get ready for the Olympic Trials in single-handed sailing: *Your Performing Edge* will motivate you to move beyond your self-imposed limitations to achieve your best - A fantastic book!”

Krysia Pohl, 2000 U.S. Olympic trials qualifier, single-handed sailing

Foreword by

Joan Benoit Samuelson
Olympic Gold Medalist, Women's Marathon

Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the inside lane of the athlete's mind and body. Her background as a competitive athlete and her professional practice as a psychologist place her in a prime position to inspire and guide people to realize their true potential. When Dr. Dahlkoetter came to speak at my running camp in Vermont, she gave a dynamic and perceptive presentation on sports psychology. Her new book now captures the essence of mental training in a concise and easy-to-read format that is filled with practical tools and exercises.

Dr. Dahlkoetter offers an uplifting, energetic, and enlightened approach to improving performance. She has a unique and encouraging style that makes learning a valuable and enjoyable experience. In "Olympic Thinking", she shares a broad range of ideas, insights, and experiences that will help athletes and performers of all abilities to focus on their goals while achieving greater levels of success.

Foreword by

Jack Canfield

CEO, Chicken Soup for the Soul Enterprises

Co-author of The Success Principles™

For more than 30 years, I have been coaching motivated individuals, entrepreneurs, educators, and corporate leaders in how to accelerate the achievement of their personal and professional goals, live their dreams, and create more joy in their life on a daily basis.

Whatever your race in life may be, the “Olympic Thinking” program will elevate you to your personal best faster than you ever thought possible. As one of the earliest champions of peak-performance, I’ve found Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter’s book contains one of the absolute best methods for creating high level performance and satisfaction in all that you do: it’s filled with lessons you can apply to your own life right away.

I was drawn to the “Olympic Thinking”book because it offers a unique approach to complete mind-body fitness. Using this training system you’ll have peak performance strategies for personal excellence in health, sports, business and life. You can develop a clear, personal plan of action to perform and feel your best in each important area of your life.

Dr. Dahlkoetter is a friend and colleague. We appear as keynote speakers on the same platform at national conferences. What she shares in this extraordinary book is an expression of her exceptional credentials in the athletic, scientific and clinical arenas, combined with her own personal experiences as a champion athlete and performance expert dedicated to helping individuals and businesses reach their true potential. I have found the “Olympic Thinking”principles particularly helpful in my professional and personal life, especially in my writing, coaching and speaking.

As the originator of the Chicken Soup for the Soul® series, I’ve personally taught millions of individuals unique formulas for success and peak performance strategies. And as a fellow colleague and educator in this area, I know, when you’re dealing with the mind and body

connection you want innovative techniques that are research driven originating from an authority you can trust. Dr. Dahlkoetter has the expertise, state-of-the-art tools and practical experience to put you or your organization in the best position for high-level achievement.

She has successfully coached Olympic Gold Medalists, surgeons, business executives, and thousands of individuals who wish to aim higher for themselves.

I invite you to join top performance coach Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Winner of the San Francisco Marathon, Hawaii Ironman Triathlon champion athlete, top-selling author, and TV guest expert as she teaches you the “Olympic Thinking” method, for personal excellence. Through her book you can create major breakthroughs in everything that you do. Her program has helped thousands to use the mind-body link to accelerate personal achievement and long-term success of many organizations.

Whether your goals are to improve your fitness, increase your confidence, lose weight, maximize your sports performance, take your business to the next level, or be a better parent or coach, Dr. Dahlkoetter’s book will offer you the definitive method and tools to create Your Gold Medal Mindset for Success!

Acknowledgments

The creation of this book has been a long-term goal that would not have been possible without the support and assistance of many people at different stages from its origin to the final production.

I would like to give my sincere thanks to Jack Canfield and Joan Benoit Samuelson for writing the foreword; to Geoff Faraghan, whose brilliant mind, computer expertise, and generosity over four editions has played a major part in making this book possible; to my graphic artists, Teresa Renee of Designed to Connect, for all their creative work, insights, and perseverance in designing the book cover; and to Dan Poynter, my mentor, the wisest person I know in the book business.

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I wish to give a special thank William Dunn, for his photography expertise and creative eye, and his continual encouragement and support throughout the writing of this book.

And thanks to all of my clients over the years, who have taught me so much about life.

Preface

A passionate involvement in sports as an elite athlete and my experience as a performance consultant have provided me with a multidimensional perspective on performance. Through my 30 years of professional private practice and research, I have been able to absorb and reveal the collective wisdom of others.

What I offer in this book is a reflection of my direct experience with athletes, coaches, and people in high stress professions striving to excel and improve the quality of their lives. Some of my clients have been Olympians, some have been serious life-long athletes, and some were just starting on their journey toward health and fitness. All have been dedicated to enhancing their level of performance and to discovering their true potential.

Valuable lessons come not only from one's own experiences, challenges, and triumphs but also from the stories and insights of others. It is gratifying to connect with people who truly commit themselves to improving their mental training skills.

Athletes who commit to enhancing their mental discipline gain the greatest prize of all – the ability to live a higher quality of life. Through a series of extensive interviews this book contains the wisdom of many of the world's greatest athletes and performers, including Lance Armstrong, Brian Tracy, Jeff Galloway, Zig Zigler, Picaboo Street, Dave Scott, Alberto Salazar, Mark Allen, Dan O'Brien, Stacy Dragila, Bill Rodgers, Joan Benoit Samuelson, Marty Liquori, Scott Tinley, Katherine Switzer, Misty Hyman, Payton Jordan, Grete Waitz, and Derek Parra. I entered their worlds, grew from their insights, and have presented their stories in the chapters to follow.

The mission of this book is to be the complete mind-body-spirit guide for optimal performance in sports and in life. It is written to address performance issues for a wide range of sports and ability levels. The most effective tools and approaches discovered during my research and individual consultations are outlined in these chapters.

I have provided clear guidelines with specific examples so that you can examine your own circumstances and goals, and then create a program that works for you.

Beyond pursuing excellence, I have found that sport teaches us countless lessons about how to live our lives. Thus, in addition to discussing athletic achievement, each section of the book also provides you with guidance on how to perform better in your personal and professional life. In doing so, this book provides the practical approach that is missing in many books on performance. You'll find over 100 mental training exercises that allow you to practice and incorporate the strategies presented. This approach will accelerate and enhance the learning process, and will allow you to fully integrate these techniques into your daily life.

CHAPTER 1

OLYMPIC THINKING

Your Gold Medal Mindset For Success!

**“Even if you’re not an Olympian,
you can think and feel, and
perform like one”**

1. Olympic Thinking: Gold Medal Mindset

By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International

<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>

You can Learn the Winning Strategies of the World's Greatest Athletes – for Sport, Business, and Life

What is Olympic Thinking? Have you ever been totally in sync with your mind and body during a workout or competition, a business negotiation, or a personal conversation? Have you ever had the sense that, for a single moment, you were in complete control of your destiny?

Have you ever felt such an intense pleasure with your training that you could continue doing it all day just for the experience, regardless of the outcome? This is what Olympians often experience when they're having the best performance of their lives. And that feeling is accessible to everyone of us.

These types of occurrences make up the essence of what I call "Olympic Thinking - those extraordinary moments when the mind and body are working together effortlessly leaving you feeling that something special has just taken place.

This state of consciousness has a multitude of well-known labels: peak performance, optimal experience, flow, and being in the zone. However you wish to portray this frame of mind, these experiences are certain to be connected to the most treasured moments in your lifetime.

Even if you will never be an Olympian, how can you get what they've got, or at least a piece of it? Below I've provided some powerful examples that illustrate the mind set, determination, and effective habits of Olympians. You can learn the winning strategies of these champion athletes and incorporate these into your daily training.

My work with a number of Olympic athletes over the years has established a framework for understanding "Olympic Thinking". Through this research, I have found several behavior patterns and

attitudes that are clearly linked to the creation of this optimal state. The examples below describe how this ideal state can be achieved more often and identify the conditions that allow it to occur.

Becoming Energized and Motivated

What do Olympians report during an optimal experience? This is a state of consciousness where a person becomes completely absorbed in the task at hand, to the exclusion of all other outside influences. You are totally focused on the present moment – the everyday world seems to recede into the background.

During the peak experience you feel more self-assured, and more fully integrated. Your mind, body, and spirit are tuned in to the moment. These are the times when you feel most energetic and fully alive.

I worked extensively with Krysia Pohl an Olympic sailor on the U.S. sailing team while she was training for the Olympics. She described her peak experience during the Olympic Trials: “I felt strong and in control the whole time. Although the race was long, it seemed like I was in a time tunnel, with an endless source of energy. I was sailing faster than I ever had before, and yet it felt so easy.... with no pain or fear, just a sense of pure joy and excitement.”

Focusing with Intensity

During these special moments an athlete focuses on the precise details of the event that allow him or her to respond optimally. Olympic athletes often report intense concentration on a small action – passing a competitor on the bike, or finding just the right swimming form.

People speak of the unusual sense of stepping into a heightened state of awareness. Sometimes there is a keen sense of “the big picture”, where a person says: “I could almost tell exactly how the next play would develop, and I could anticipate the correct moves to handle the situation.”

In my interview with Misty Hyman, Olympic gold medalist, in the 200-meter butterfly, she reported:

“For some reason at the Olympics I said, OK, I’m not going to try to control this. I’m going to allow it to happen. So I walked in there and just relaxed, and said OK, I can do this.

“Everything went so smoothly. I don’t remember the events of the finals exactly. I know that I was definitely in the moment, and I wasn’t thinking too much. I was doing what I needed to do. I remember feeling nervous while going through my warm-ups. I felt different than I ever had before. Things would just happen naturally when I would get in the water. Even though I wasn’t thinking about my stroke, I would just do things correctly without really trying. My body would just take over.

“Once I was on the blocks I just said to myself, Ok, I’m going to do a 200 butterfly, and I’ve done a million 200 butterflies in my life. I have been training for this and I know exactly what I need to do. I remember being able to feel every cell in my body, and be completely present. Things felt like they were in slow motion. I dove in the water and it just clicked. I felt more power than ever before.”

Handling Adversity

Olympic athletes are mentally tough and know how to deal with the ups and downs of life. **Lance Armstrong** is the **definition of personal transformation, resiliency, and inner strength**. He won the Tour de France, arguably the greatest bicycle race in the world 7 times, but even this accomplishment pales when compared to another victory he achieved earlier. In 1996 and ’97 he fought the greatest battle of his life in overcoming testicular cancer. With only a **50 percent chance** of living, Armstrong **beat the odds**, moving beyond mere survival to capture cycling’s most prestigious crown.

Lance knows about **life's setbacks**; he's a master at **turning them into comebacks**. In an interview just prior to the 2000 Olympics Lance said: "I owe all my victories to the cancer; this illness enabled me to win the Tour. Had I gotten just an early stage illness, I wouldn't be the same now. I would not have won the Tour de France two times. If I had not been through hell, I couldn't be here now."

When Lance came to San Francisco for the Grand Prix cycling series in September of 2001, **I had the opportunity to interview him**. I said, "Lance, I know that coming back from cancer has made you **mentally tough**. How has that experience helped you **stay positive** in your training and racing?" He told me: "Whenever I feel like I'm having a **bad day** out there on the bike, I **think back** to Indianapolis in '96 and '97, when the **cancer** was in its **worse stages**, and that **puts life into perspective**. I realize that **things aren't so bad**. Coming from that experience, I can keep a positive outlook and **handle any workout**."

Managing Energy Wisely

When you're training for an endurance event like the triathlon or marathon pacing yourself becomes a key issue. Many athletes burn out much too early in life because they've failed to pace themselves properly. Dan O'Brien, Olympic Decathlon Gold Medalist knows about the importance of personal pacing.

After failing to make the opening height in the pole vault in the 1992 Olympic Trials, O'Brien made a tremendous comeback. Only six weeks later, he smashed the world record by over 500 points in the decathlon in the Deca Star track meet in Tulance, France. O'Brien went on to win the gold medal in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. I had the opportunity to talk with Dan about his event.

He told me, "The decathlon is like an endurance event. It takes place over two days with 31 hours of competition including all the warm-ups and cool-downs. So you need to learn to manage your energy and mental state properly. To be successful you have to be able to settle

yourself in between events and put your motor into idle. Then, after you've relaxed, you can bring all your emotion into each event, then bring it back down to recover. The problem with many athletes is that they are running at 6000 RPM's the whole time.

Holding on to Personal Enjoyment

One key characteristic of Olympic Thinking, perhaps the best of all, is a sense of sheer ecstasy or joy. One Olympic athlete recalled her feelings swimming in the ocean as a child: "I developed an emotional and physical attraction to the water and the simple joy of movement." Later, when she completed her first swim across the San Francisco Bay in the Escape from Alcatraz triathlon, she related:

"There is no amount of wealth, no position in life that can equal that experience. It's not the prize at the finish line that counts. It's doing an activity that is totally pure and experiencing an ideal state of well-being."

And to get **FREE instant access** to my **Private Mentoring Program** with **Your Performing Edge coaching tips**, video training, articles, and **visualization exercises** – Join our community at:

<http://www.DrJoAnn.com/tips>

CHAPTER 2

OLYMPIC THINKING

PART 2

Create Your Own Gold Medal Mindset For Success!

**“Anyone can become
an Olympic Thinker”**

2. Olympic Thinking Tips: Action Plan

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

In Part 1 we talked about the key characteristics of elite athletes. We discussed how you can learn to think like an Olympian. Through my work with top athletes I've noticed there are a group of traits that define the champion's mentality. The characteristics that make a champion can be attained by anyone who wants to excel in running or triathlons. Below I've provided several powerful examples that illustrate the mind set and effective patterns of Olympians and I outline how you can translate these strategies into your everyday training.

Bouncing Back from Life's Misfortunes

The road to success is rarely easy or smooth. So many things can come between you and your goal. Thus it's important to acquire the proper tools to handle any barrier that comes your way. The Olympic Games are filled with examples of athletes who had to overcome tremendous hardships on the road to the victory stand.

Most people are familiar with Joan Benoit Samuelson's phenomenal recovery story when she won the Olympic marathon trials in 1984 only 17 days after undergoing knee surgery. She went on to win the gold medal in the first-ever women's Olympic marathon – a pivotal event for women's sports and for the marathon.

At the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, we were introduced to Chris Witty who was diagnosed with mononucleosis only three weeks before her event. Yet she found a way to cope with her illness and win the gold medal in the women's 1000 meters while setting a world-record in the process.

However, the real comeback story of the Winter Games was Chris Klug, who claimed bronze in the parallel giant slalom event in

snowboarding. Eight months before, Klug had to overcome a serious liver ailment to qualify for the Salt Lake Games. In July, Klug lay on the operating table with his life in the hands of a doctor. Klug, who suffered from the same liver disease that killed former football great Walter Payton, needed a liver transplant to save his life. The transplant did exactly that, and by the end of the year, Klug was back on the World Cup circuit.

At the Winter Games, Klug won his final heat of the day, despite having to use duct tape to repair a boot buckle that broke on the first of his two races. He went on to win the bronze, and we saw the first-ever Olympic medal awarded to an organ donor recipient. Moments after the race, Klug scaled two retaining fences to share hugs with all his supporters.

The message is that anything is possible, but you have to believe in yourself, and you have to fight. Each of these athletes set a goal and they had to overcome a terrific obstacle to reach their destination. They used that obstacle as a vehicle for learning. They stuck with their plan and moved ahead in spite of their setback. They did not let it take away their dream.

Knowing When to Step Away and When to Return

Sometimes you have to step outside the training arena. When nordic combined skier Todd Lodwick was training for the Winter Olympics, there came a point when things were not going well. He said, "I knew that the missing link between me and the gold medal was my jumping. I realized I wasn't having fun." His coach said, "It's not like you can go to a store and buy confidence." He advised Todd to take two months off from skiing.

The break did wonders for him. He came back with a vengeance and he was on fire. Todd had a strong World Cup season and came to his third Olympic Winter Games looking to win the United States' first Olympic medal in the nordic combined. His seventh-place finish fell short of his goal of a podium, but it was the best American finish in an individual nordic combined event in Olympic history.

Sometimes taking a break can be the best thing you could possibly do for yourself. It's hard to stop training when that's the only lifestyle you've known. But when you recognize that you are not progressing, and you step away from your sport, sometimes you can gain the greatest gift of all. You can come back with a desire like you've never before experienced. Once you regain that sense fun and joy in your training, your performances will skyrocket.

Detaching from the Outcome

Just before beginning the long program in the Winter Games figure skating competition, 16-year old Sarah Hughes said, "OK, I'm not going to worry about getting the gold medal, or any medal. I'm just going to go out there and skate and have fun with this."

With a near perfect program, Sarah moved from fourth to first and captured the gold medal at the 2002 Salt Lake Games. She was the fifth-to-last skater of the night and had to watch favorites like Michelle Kwan and Irina Slutskaya skate for the gold after her. Hughes cleanly landed seven triple jumps, including two triple-triple combinations, to claim first place. It marked the first time that a skater had jumped from fourth place in the short program to win the Olympic title since the 1988 Games.

She said: "In the past I was always worrying about what was going to happen afterward. This time I just enjoyed my moment of skating."

Letting go of the outcome can open your mind and body to exceptional levels of strength, awareness, energy, and enjoyment. Detach yourself from the winning, be fully present with what you are doing, and the results will take care of themselves. When you become overly concerned with receiving awards or medals you create considerable tension and pressure that can interfere with the pleasure and satisfaction of your activity. Detaching from the external results reduces stress and adds to your performance.

Detachment does not mean that you do not care about your performance. Of course you care deeply about how well you are doing.

The outcome is a gauge to assess how much you've improved and it's an essential means for personal growth and discovery. So acknowledge it for that purpose.

Detachment means letting go of all the ego implications that we ascribe to success. A win or a loss is never an evaluation of your self-worth or your value as a human being. By letting go of the results, you gain a healthier outlook on your sport. You become a more balanced person when you see each event as only one small part in a universe of endeavors. In practicing detachment, you can experience more personal freedom and take more risks without fear of failure.

Even if you may never run as fast as Joan Samuelson, or ski like Todd Lodwick, you can train, with their same fluidity and joy, and you can learn to think like a champion.

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<http://www.DrJoAnn.com/tips>

CHAPTER 3

POSITIVE IMAGES

Visualize to Energize

**“Close your eyes, open your
mind, and imagine”**

3. Positive Images: Visualize to Energize

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International**

(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)

Meaningful achievements begin with a positive vision that we fully welcome, commit to, and strive to complete with passion. We first create a picture in the mind's eye, and we imagine what it would be like to accomplish that goal and reach our destination. Then we seek out a path - a method of traveling that will lead us to where we want to go.

Finally, we step into that image and apply all our knowledge, our drive, and our power to turn the dream into reality. Creative visions and dedicated actions direct us, energize us, and inspire us to overcome obstacles to discover our performing edge.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to give a talk on mental training at Bill Rodgers and Joan Benoit Samuelson's running camp in Vermont. While out running with Joan, I asked about her mindset during her historic race in the 1985 Chicago Marathon, when she raced head-to-head with Ingrid Kristiansen, the world record holder at that time. Joan had just won her Gold Medal in the first ever women's Olympic marathon in 1984.

Joan related her experience: "That was one of the most difficult races of my life. Ingrid and I were running side-by-side on a world record pace. We were at 31 minutes at the 10K mark. I kept surging ahead, but Ingrid would always respond. I couldn't seem to shake her. I had prepared mentally for the race by using imagery.

During the marathon, I would see myself running easily on my favorite ten-mile loop. Then I would picture myself on a six-mile loop, followed by another ten-mile trail run. Dividing it up in my mind that way made the race seem shorter and more enjoyable." In Chicago, Joan finally pulled away from Ingrid, winning the race in 2:21:15. She broke the American record for the marathon and ran the 2nd fastest time in history. Her U.S. record still stands today.

The utilization of mental imagery for enhanced performance is not new, as confirmed by this example. The practice of martial arts

in Asia, meditation and yoga in ancient India, and hypnotherapy are other illustrations of how the mind's capacity to picture situations can be a critical part of one's athletic performance. Whereas mental training may have been viewed skeptically in the past, now imagery and other similar techniques have become an integral part of most sports programs. Serious athletes who want to engage in more complete preparation, train both their body and mind for top-level performance.

What is Mental Imagery?

Images are the mental representations of our experience. While verbal language is the most common means for communicating with the external world, imagery is a powerful means for internal communication. The visualization process can be defined as the conscious creation of mental or sensory images for the purpose of enhancing your training and your life. It is the deliberate attempt to select positive mental images to affect how your body responds to a given situation.

Just as we work out our bodies, we also need to exercise the brain. Mental training is like taking your brain to the gym. We want our bodies to have many different gears and speeds. We also need the mind to be flexible – to be able to shift into different gears depending on the task at hand. Mental imagery is a powerful tool for achieving this purpose.

By using imagery or visualization you can create, in vivid detail, a replay of one of your best performances in the past, or you can mentally rehearse an upcoming event, and you can see yourself doing it right. Imagery guides much of an athlete's experience because it is a more efficient, complete language than self-talk.

Try to describe to someone how to execute the perfect freestyle swim stroke, in detail, using words. You could write a book. Now show the same stroke through a video replay of Australian Ian Thorpe (known as the Thorpedo), who dominated the swimming scene in the 2000 Olympics. You convey the exact message you want in a few seconds.

Most of us daydream and re-experience situations in our minds in a haphazard way. The fact that we can remember previous

experiences in detailed fashion is why visualization works so well for athletes. Most good athletes have discovered this technique on their own and may use it occasionally to improve learning and performance. However, for maximum results, you need to control your imagery and practice it on a regular basis rather than just let thoughts pass in and out. Through imagery you can re-create your best performances in great detail, and then use that energy to help you through any situation you may encounter.

Megan Quann used the power of mental imagery to win two Olympic gold medals in Sydney. For two years prior to the 2000 Olympic Trials, Megan Quann went to bed visualizing her dream of a world record in the 100-meter breaststroke.

Megan's bedroom is filled with pictures of the pools where she has had successful swims: the pool in San Antonio, Texas, where she set an American record in the 100-meter breaststroke and the pool in Sydney where she won a silver medal at the Pan-Pacific Championships.

Each night before she went to sleep, Megan would visualize herself setting a world record in the 100-meter breaststroke. She did not see herself standing on the podium. Instead, she would visualize swimming a fast race.

She would lie down in bed and take some deep breaths, letting her heart rate come down to her normal resting level. Then she would reach for her stopwatch, close her eyes, and imagine herself at the Olympic pool in Sydney.

Megan describes her imagery: "They bring us out behind the starting blocks. I hear the announcer say my name and my accomplishments. Then there are three whistles. I take off my warm-ups and step up to the block. I hear, 'The 100-meter breaststroke. Take your mark.' When I hear the gun, I start the stopwatch by my bed.

As I dive in, I can feel my stroke through the water. I see the tiles on the bottom of the pool. I swim to the end, touch the wall, and make my turn – 50 meters to go. I tell myself, this is it, I have to go faster. As I touch the wall, I press the button on my stopwatch. I feel my carotid artery on my neck. My heart rate has risen to 192. The watch reads 1:05 – a world record time."

Although Megan did not break the world record in Sydney, she broke the American record, and has done so several times in her event. Her personal best time of 1:07:05 makes her the second fastest woman of all time.

Even if you are not yet accomplished in visualization techniques, it is reassuring to know that everyone has an imagination, and everyone can improve with practice. You can develop positive images and utilize the experiences and feelings that serve you best. You can take the best you have been and the best you can possibly be, incorporate that into your mind's eye, and then transform those visions into reality.

You can use visualization for virtually any goal or problem that you need to work on. Imagery can be used for reducing stress, focusing attention, energizing, problem solving, or skill learning.

I spoke with national champion Regina Jacobs two weeks before the 2000 Olympic Trials. She talked about how imagery has helped her uncover her true potential in the 1500 and 5000 meters. During visualization she incorporates all of her senses into the experience. She feels her forefoot pushing off the track, she hears her running splits, and she sees herself surging ahead of the competition.

She experiences all of the elements of her race in explicit detail before executing her performance. At the 2000 Olympic Trials, Regina went on to set a new American record for the 5000 meters using mental training techniques on a regular basis. It appears generally true that athletes who are most successful have developed the psychological foundation for their performances well in advance of the actual event.

You can also use imagery for controlling emotional states, for dealing with unexpected contingencies, for centering, or for blocking distractions. Andy Palmer, Ph.D., coach, sports psychologist, and former 2:16 marathoner, tells athletes to consider using imagery as a way to deal with specific weaknesses in their workouts and races.

He states: "If you tend to go out too fast in the beginning of races, try imagining that situation and mentally rehearse what you would do at the moment you know you're in trouble. You'll realize that you can be in control of the situation."

You may also use visualization to set appropriate goals, to motivate yourself, to mentally rehearse your workouts, or to manage pain during a race.

In my interview with champion miler Marty Liquori, he noted: “I have always believed, if you want to be a champion, you will have to win every race in your mind 100 times before you win it in real life that last time.”

So visualization in your mind’s eye is a powerful tool. It can help improve everything you want to do. You can gain greater control over your body, mind, and emotions, and integrate them to maximize the quality of your workouts and your life. By changing the inner attitude of the mind, you can transform the outer elements of your athletic training and your life.

How does Imagery Work?

There are two primary theories that explain why visualization may have an impact on sports performance. First, images may be an efficient way of coding or representing instructions for movement. As described earlier, forming an image of a correct swim stroke provides a simpler, more complete description of the motion than is possible with words.

Secondly, when you imagine yourself performing an action, you are transmitting electrical impulses to the muscles involved in executing the action. When I do a computerized biofeedback assessment with a runner, for instance, I can place EMG electrodes on the quadriceps muscles, and we can see that those muscles are being activated as he or she visualizes running a race.

During imagery, these neuromuscular impulses have the same pattern as the impulses generated when the athlete is actually running. Of course, these changes are somewhat less than those that occur when you actually perform the activity. You can’t simply visualize your way to a great 10K, but the internal changes may be strengthening the neural pathways involved when these movements are performed.

CHAPTER 4

THE POWER OF IMAGERY

Action Plan

“See it, Say it, Do it!”

4. The Power of Imagery: Action Plan

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
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Imagery Through the Senses

Now let's talk about a variety of imagery categories and see how visualization incorporates the senses. After you become familiar with the various options, you can then select a particular type of imagery that matches your own perception style. Most experts agree that for maximum effectiveness, mental images should be positive and vivid, and evoke as many senses as possible. Why should imagery be a sensory experience?

Events can be felt and remembered most vividly through the senses. When the senses are brought into an experience, it makes you pay better attention to the details of how you complete an action or skill. You can integrate your emotions and senses into the preparation for each type of action. So the goal is to fully experience everything you need to do to be successful in your performances – your training form, pacing, balance, range of motion, even your state of mind and energy level. So if you want to make a constructive change in your performance, you need to incorporate as many senses as possible into your imagery.

You may be able to see yourself bounding up a steep hill, or hear the sound of the crowd cheering you toward the finish line, or feel the speed in your legs as you surge around the curve on a track. For some athletes mental images may not be as visual but rather more kinesthetic responses. For instance, swimmers often need to have a feel for the water in order to excel in their sport.

Imagery Options

There are three primary types of imagery:

External visual imagery: You become an outside observer, as though you are watching a movie of yourself performing. This method is useful for analyzing your form or distancing yourself from pain during a race.

Internal visual imagery: You visualize from the inside of your mind and body. With this type of imagery you mentally rehearse what you actually see with your own eyes as you execute an event. It's like having a video camera on your head that records what you are seeing as you are moving.

Kinesthetic imagery: You don't see anything but you experience through your sense of touch. For instance, you feel the wind on your face or notice your arms propelling you forward as you swim or cycle.

Using the senses makes your imagery come alive. This process allows you to bring your mind, body, and spirit into your preparation. It provides a new dimension to your mental training and brings you closer to what the real situation will be like. Feeling bodily sensations as if an event were actually happening allows the body, mind, and soul to prepare more completely for an upcoming goal that you want to pursue.

You can apply the strategies above in an infinite variety of ways. Experiment with these strategies and find the ones that work best for you. Be creative and come up with your own system. Begin to notice what form your imagery takes so you can be aware of the way you experience your sport.

Here are some ideas that have dramatically improved the performances of my athlete clients. First, you can utilize what I call my "**magnet technique**." Imagine that the athlete ahead of you has a magnet on his or her back.

Rather than working hard to catch up, envision the magnet drawing you toward the person effortlessly. Once you pull alongside, place the magnet on the next athlete ahead of you or at the top of the next hill.

Gordon Bakoulis, 2000 Olympic marathon trials qualifier, related: "I kept an open mind while running the 2000 New York City Marathon. I found a quiet place before the start where I was

able to lie down, close my eyes, and visualize the course, mile by mile. During the last, tough 10K, I imagined myself rolling up a ball of string that drew me to the finish.”

I have used this technique many times to move ahead into the lead in triathlons and marathons. Using the mind in this way allows you to take the pressure off and have more fun with your racing.

You’ll find that your competition will appear less threatening because you can stay in contact with those that normally pull away in races. You’ll be able to maintain a steady pace while using less energy and sustain concentration for longer periods.

Another powerful strategy I’ve developed is the “**funnel technique**.” Using this method toward the end of a long event can make the difference between finishing strong and falling apart. During the last few minutes or miles of a long race, fatigue can easily set in. Marathoners, for example, often experience a psychological “wall” near mile 20 of the race.

Try imagining you have a funnel attached to the top of your head that is gathering energy from all around you. Feel the endless reserves of strength and power filling every cell in your body. You’ll begin to notice a mental and physical lift that can carry you through to the finish line.

Before I started training for my first Hawaii Ironman Triathlon, I had never attempted an event of this length. I used imagery to prepare mentally and build my confidence going into the race. Every night for six weeks prior to the race I would spend fifteen minutes visualizing the event.

On race morning, I completed the swim easily. However, the long, grueling bike ride through black lava fields took its toll. After I completed the bike ride and dismounted, I felt horrible. I had swum 2.4 miles and cycled 112 miles in 100 degrees weather, with 90 percent humidity. The sun was beating down during the hottest part of the day. I left the bike transition area and began walking the marathon course. I told myself: “26 miles, yeah right. There’s no way I’m going to finish this. I might as well pack it in right now.” I was doing a superb job of talking myself out of the race.

Then a woman passed me whom I had beaten in several other races. I said to myself, “Oh God, even she is passing me.” She looked

back and said, “Hey, Dahlkoetter, you’re walking!” That’s probably the best thing that could have happened. I was angry. I said to myself, “I’ve got to do something major here to get myself going.”

I pictured in my mind a time when I felt really good on a run – the San Francisco Marathon. I visualized myself feeling powerful, relaxed, and focused. I remember the race conditions were perfect that day. The weather was cool, and I was mentally and physically prepared. My legs felt strong, and I was in “the zone.” I won the race in 2:43:20, a personal record by over 20 minutes! When my consciousness shifted back to the Ironman, I found myself no longer walking. I was running well, the crowd was cheering, and I regained my energy.

After completing that mental imagery process early in the run, I realized that I could go on and possibly finish my first Ironman Triathlon. I continued to gain momentum, feeling stronger with every mile, as I moved up in the ranks. At that point, nothing could stop me.

I had begun the run in 19th place and eventually finished as 2nd woman overall – a race I will remember forever. The visualization had transformed my entire outlook and empowered me to run the race of my life.

Guidelines for Effective Imagery

Imagery is not wishful thinking or daydreaming about the great athlete you would like to be. It is a learned skill that requires effort, concentration, discipline, and regular practice to gain the maximum benefits. Here are the key principles for doing effective mental imagery:

Timing: Imagery can be used most any time - at home, or before, during, or after training and racing. In the learning phases imagery is easier to do in a quiet, non-distracting environment. Imagery is most effective when the mind is calm and the body is relaxed.

Breathing: Begin with a few minutes of deep abdominal breathing. Put one hand on your stomach about two inches below the belly button and feel your hand rise and fall with each breath.

Imagine that with each inhale you are filling up a balloon inside the stomach. As you exhale, the balloon collapses back down.

Imaging: Create in your mind as vivid an image as possible of what you want to achieve in your sport. Let distracting thoughts and feelings float away as you refocus on your image.

Sensing: Bring in all five of your senses, if possible, so you can see, hear, and feel what it's like to have a great workout or race. (Taste and smell are often powerful senses for triggering memories but are often more difficult to incorporate into day-to-day imagery training.) Bring the scene into the present tense so you are totally focused on the task at hand.

Accentuating the Positive: Don't replay the mistakes. You want to remove the memory of errors. One of my athlete clients related to me: "I'm really good at negative visualization - I have so many experiences to tap into." If you see yourself doing something incorrectly, edit the film in your mind and replay it exactly as you wish it to happen. Imagine that your performance is equal to or better than your previous best.

Pacing: Mentally rehearse your training at the same rhythm and pace that you want in your performance to establish the appropriate neurological pattern within the brain.

Modeling: Use visual models and guides. Before going to sleep at night try watching a video of a superior performance. For instance, get out your recordings from the last Olympics or World Championships. Then visualize yourself moving just as fluidly and powerfully as perhaps Tegla Loroupe or Lance Armstrong.

Turning Your Images into Reality

Each time you are energized by an experience, inspired by someone you meet, or motivated by a performance, you have the chance to anchor the memory in your mind and use that vision whenever you need it. When you revisit those positive memories on a regular basis, you can bring to mind empowering thoughts and feelings that will inspire your performances and recharge your life.

When you construct clear images of the road you want to travel and embrace those visions on a daily basis, you can start to fully utilize the power of your mind. Begin by mentally viewing your goals upon waking each morning.

See yourself experiencing those actions in your mind, body, and spirit. Feel yourself doing exactly what you want to do, the way you would like to do it. Then incorporate those images during your actual day-to-day functioning.

In order to properly train the body, you must first train the mind. Inspiring images can create powerful emotions and produce superior performances. So it's best to focus on positive images and memories.

At first you may not fully believe that you can perform up to the level of your visualizations. It's OK to act as if it is already happening. With practice your body will come into line with your mental images. If a negative image comes into your mind, just breathe deeply and let it go with your exhale.

Then bring in a positive image with your next breath. As you practice and refine your mental training, your images will become clearer and more convincing.

Remember, mental imagery can be effective at any level of training or competition. Mental and physical training can work quite well to complement one another.

The more familiar you become with the intricacies of your sport, the more effective your mental practice will become. Of course, mental imagery is not a substitute for physical training. You still have to put in the miles. But it can make all the difference in the quality and enjoyment of your training and racing. It will move you much closer to realizing your true potential.

Olympic Thinking Visualization

Find a comfortable, quiet place, close your eyes, and take 10 deep abdominal breaths, remembering to exhale fully. Recall a moment in time when you were completely engaged in what you were doing – a period when you felt optimistic and confident, not concerned about the outcome. Bring the event into the present tense and be there with all five senses.

Notice everything around you – what you're doing, what you're wearing, where you are, if you are alone or with others. Become aware of how the situation evolved and what is happening at this moment. Pay close attention to your feelings, your thoughts, and your physical sensations. Do a body scan to check out how each part is working. Notice how each muscle group is feeling. Are you relaxed and yet alert? Are you energized and focused? Is your mind very active or calm? Are you enjoying yourself?

Now let an image come to mind to represent this experience. It could be a color, a shape, or a symbol – something to help you remember this wonderful moment and anchor it in your memory. Now imagine that you are placing this image in your heart. Whenever you want to re-experience these feelings (for instance, in your next workout or competition), you can simply recall your symbol, and you can recapture all that power, confidence, and focus any time you need it.

After you complete your session, open your eyes and write down your impressions of the experience. You can write in prose or in single words or phrases – note anything that comes to mind. If you choose, you can draw your images. There is no right or wrong to your imagery. Just accept whatever you experience, without judgment, and draw the meaningful connections.

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CHAPTER 5

POWER WORDS

Language for Success

**“Performance is 90% perception
and 10% reality”**

5. Power Words: Language for Success

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International**

<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>

Words can have tremendous power over our minds and, subsequently, our athletic performance. It has been said: Performance is 90% perception and 10% reality. Each of us is constantly engaging in our own internal thought processing.

We talk to ourselves and interpret each situation based on our perception of what is going on around us. If this self-talk is an accurate representation of reality, then we function quite well. If our thoughts are irrational or exaggerated, then we may become anxious or emotional, and performance is likely to decline.

Reconstructing Your Thoughts

Thoughts and attitudes are cognitive in nature. Our perception and thoughts often lead to an emotional response. These thoughts and emotions then provide the direction and control over our actions. Thus it is crucial to become aware of what thoughts and self-statements you are using prior to training or racing.

Self-talk can provide a sense of control if you learn to become aware of self-statements and direct them in a positive manner. You can, through self-talk, evaluate a potentially negative situation as much less threatening once you have a sense of control over your thought processes. How you interpret what is happening and the kinds of labels you place on each situation determine how you are affected emotionally.

Defining Power Words

One powerful way to structure our thoughts and transform our goals into results is through the use of power words. A power word is a strong, positive self-statement, spoken in the present tense, about a goal that has the potential for being realized. It is a pre-

planned statement of an aspiration, presented to the mind as if it has already been achieved.

You present it to the mind in the present rather than the future tense. Although intellectually you know your goal is in the future, successful mental programming dictates that it be stated in the present tense as an already realized fact.

Power words are a powerful way to cancel or correct old negative thoughts or ideas. Negative thoughts are carried in our mental computers and are the source of self-limitation, fear, inhibition, and frustration for all of us. In contrast, self-image, health, physical abilities, relationships, and competition can all be affected positively by the repetition of an affirmation.

A power word creates an attitude or posture in life that says: "I can do this!" It is a conscious, carefully worded positive statement that guides our behaviors in a constructive way. It empowers us to replace old pessimistic scripts with new creative phrases to help us realize our dreams. Words are effective tools for transforming our perception of daily events.

The mind and body are so well connected that the body often does not know whether a phrase or image is real, dreamed, or imagined. So when your mind creates an image of success, your central nervous system and whole body will process that image as if it were real.

Most of the time our actions are reflections of our mental pictures. These pictures are placed in our mind most often by words. So choosing the right words can make or break a performance.

I often use power words with my athlete clients to assist them in reconstructing their thoughts. If athletes find themselves saying: "I've never been able to beat this person before in a race," they are preparing themselves to lose again in this situation.

I would help them to say something like: "I know I am capable of beating this person. All I have to do is take it one mile at a time. I have to focus on what is happening and what is about to happen. I can then control my own performance. I have worked hard, and I am well prepared for this competition."

How are Power Words Used?

Whenever you want to maximize your chances of getting the results you want, affirmations are one of the fastest ways to arrive there. If you want to create real changes in the way you train and race, use affirmations to:

- Improve concentration
- Relax and sleep well
- Build self-confidence
- Accelerate learning of athletic skills
- Deal with fear and negativity
- Heal quickly from injuries
- Increase endurance and strength
- Train faster and more efficiently
-

Guidelines for Using Power Words

The subconscious mind is literal or factual in nature, just like the hard drive of a computer. It receives information exactly the way you present it. Thus, in using affirmations it's best not to use statements that are negative (e.g., "I hope I don't bonk in this race").

If I say: "Don't think of pink elephants," what's the first thing that pops into your mind? You end up drilling into your mind the very thing you're trying to avoid doing. Thus, affirmations need to be presented in a specific way to optimize their effectiveness.

I was recently working with a bicycle racer, Jill, who had a fear of riding in large groups. She had fallen down several times while riding in a close pack and would get anxious whenever she got too close to other riders. The problem intensified whenever she was riding in a road race, having to make sharp turns in close quarters.

I asked Jill, what are you saying to yourself while you're riding? She answered, "I repeat to myself over and over: I hope I don't crash, I hope I don't crash." Can you guess what happened after that? She was continually programming her mind and body to anticipate crashing.

Consequently, she was bracing herself, holding her arms and shoulders so tightly that she could not handle the bike effectively. I then taught her to turn her goals into positive self-statements: “I am riding the bike smoothly and easily.” “I am growing more relaxed with each mile.” That was a turning point for Jill’s cycling career. For the first time, she could really enjoy riding.

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CHAPTER 6

POWER WORDS – Part 2

Positive Phrases

**“Words have power over our
minds and our bodies”**

6. Power Words: Positive Phrases

By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)

Principles to Follow in Constructing Power Words

Use the present tense: Act as if it's already happening. If you have a race coming up, avoid using the future tense because the mind will see it as if it were still in the future. Instead of saying, "I will be strong and fast," say, "I am strong and fast." Or you can say, "I am becoming stronger and faster every day."

Employ a positive outlook: When you use negative words, they may be taken in by the brain without your awareness. Affirm what you do want to happen rather than what you don't want to occur. Rather than saying, "I won't tighten up in races," say "I remain relaxed and focused at all times."

Use self-image statements: Whenever possible, construct affirmations beginning with "I" or "I am..." or "I enjoy..."

Use specific, brief phrases: Make each phrase a short, clear statement of your feelings, so that you can remember the phrase, and the mind can then take it in more easily.

Make them permanent: Use the words "I always..."

Use mood words: Include words that suggest strong, positive emotion: "I always get excited and enthusiastic at races."

Anticipate success: When creating your affirmations, don't let your critical side limit the type of phrases you create. Use whatever thoughts seem to work for you.

Use cards or post-its: Write each affirmation on an individual index card or post-it, and place them where you can view them regularly - by your desk, refrigerator, or at a night stand.

Now that we've learned the basic guidelines for using affirmations, we can discuss specific ways to use positive self-talk for any problem you want to address.

We often find that our minds are flooded with distorted thoughts that we accept as true (e.g., "Just face it, I'm a slug, I'll never get any faster"). You may have heard the phrase "stinkin' thinkin'."

This expression most accurately describes the negative thought pattern that people tend to fall into when they are lacking self-confidence. When you're not aware of what is happening in your mind, this destructive pattern can snowball and become bigger than life.

If you can catch yourself in the early stages, before your thinking gets out of control, you can change the way you talk to yourself and perhaps explore a new path.

You need to keep experimenting with new ways of thinking until you can say, this one is right for me. Next time you're upset, listen to the words you use with yourself. Notice if they are reinforcing old, worn out ways of thinking or encouraging a fresh outlook. Try to choose words that invite constructive changes.

Moving From Negative to Affirmative

Let's now take time to explore some of your negative thought traps. What are the bad thought habits that you consistently use to interpret daily events in a way that brings you down?

Even the most rational person on earth functions at some distance from reality. The cognitive distortions we use often have no basis in reality. Yet as long as we ruminate about them, they hold power over us.

Below I have listed some common negative self-statements that come from my athlete clients. Then I provide a possible constructive counter-statement that you might substitute in your mind.

Change: "I never train well in bad weather."

To: “I perform well under any conditions.” “I am extremely flexible and adjustable.” “I handle adversity quite well.”

Change: “I hate climbing hills.”

To: “Hills are my friends.” “These hills are fatigue-proofing my legs.” “I can float up this hill like a gazelle.”

Change: “I’m too fat and too slow.”

To: “My legs are getting stronger and faster everyday.” “I float and glide along the trails.”

Change: “I get distracted so easily.”

To: “I can concentrate fully and stay in the moment.” “I am able to re-focus quickly.” “I’m only thinking about what I need to do at this time.”

Notice what areas of training you are struggling with and create your own positive counter-statements to move closer to your goals.

Using Thoughts as a Form of Energy

Positive self-statements can be programmed deeply into your mind if you repeat them several times while in a relaxed state. You might also want to combine them with a visualization process so you picture yourself achieving your goal as you reinforce it verbally with affirmations.

You can also say them to yourself as you go about the day. Try saying them as you look into the mirror upon first rising in the morning and before retiring. Commuting to and from work is a great time to recite affirmations, or while walking, or waiting in line at the grocery store.

One powerful way to take in positive information is to hear it from your own voice: Record a tape on which you give instructions to take ten deep breaths, then repeat each of your affirmations slowly three times.

You can also read any quotations from other writers that you find particularly inspirational. Then play the tape before bedtime. Your subconscious mind will work with this information during sleep. Also, type up your affirmations on cards and place them in strategic places around the house and work.

Notice the type of language you use in your conversations with people. As you talk about, say, your upcoming marathon, do you characterize it as a long, arduous, painful task? Or do you describe it as an exciting endurance adventure. Try incorporating helpful affirmations into your conversations with people and notice how they tend to respond with positive statements. You can also ask others to give you affirmations (e.g., remind you that you are a capable, energetic athlete).

Now, try mentally programming your goals and make them come alive by turning them into positive self-statements. Take each one of your goals and phrase it as an affirmation. Here is an example:

Your Goal: To become stronger and faster in your upcoming event.

Power Words: “My body and mind are growing stronger and healthier each moment.” “Every day I am moving closer to my goal.”

Finally, you can notice how your affirmations are modeled in the environment. If, for instance, you want to run lightly, with soft, quiet feet, observe how your cat moves around the room. Then give yourself permission to run gracefully just like that animal.

A precautionary note needs to be provided at this point. Affirmations should not be used alone to cover up a deep emotional conflict. They are best employed in conjunction with a variety of other methods.

If you are feeling particularly sad or depressed, honor your feelings and take them as warning signs that something inside needs to be addressed. First, take immediate steps to explore your mental state and deal directly with the problem. You could perhaps talk to a friend, see a sports psychologist, or write out your thoughts in a journal.

Once you are feeling better, then use affirmations to reinforce a foundation of inner strength that can allow you to move forward.

Remember, affirmations are essential tools to help you focus on personal strengths. Every great performance is given by an athlete who has conditioned the mind to see the possibility of achieving that performance

Power Words for Competition

Racing is one area where plenty of negative thinking occurs and where affirmations can be particularly effective. If you have trouble with the competitive environment, think of the positive benefits of racing and write them down as affirmations:

- ☛ I am well prepared, rested, and ready for this event.
- ☛ Racing gives me a chance to celebrate my fitness.
- ☛ I gain energy from other athletes in the race.
- ☛ We can all help each other do our best in this race.
- ☛ In a race I can be towed along to a new personal record.
- ☛ I am a strong, capable athlete.
- ☛ I love racing; I am totally focused.

Try creating your own affirmations and repeating each of them to yourself 3-5 times on a daily basis. Notice how your attitude begins to improve over time during training and racing.

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CHAPTER 7

PRESENT FOCUS

Centering-Breathing-Calming

**“Relaxation does for the mind
what stretching does
for the body”**

7. Present Focus: Centering-Breathing-Calming

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

We are continually moving between tension and relaxation, both mentally and physically. Athletes need a certain amount of tension to be able to perform well. However, if muscles become too tight, we lose our fluidity, our sense of control. Each of us needs to find that right balance to move and stay within our comfort zone.

Haile Gebrselassie is the perfect model for relaxed running under pressure. Haile is the premier distance runner in the world and a living legend in Ethiopia. He is the latest in that country's long line of distance greats that includes Abebe Bikila, Mamo Wolde, and Miruts Yifter.

Gebrselassie, who won the 1996 and 2000 Olympic gold medals in the 10,000-meters, has an awesome combination of poise, stamina, and a devastating kick. In Sydney, while standing at the starting line of the 10,000-meter finals, most of the runners were looking tense and nervous.

Haile, on the other hand, was apparently joking with someone on the sidelines. He appeared so relaxed he was actually bent over laughing while waiting for the race to start. Once the gun went off, he moved into a relaxed focus and went on to capture the Olympic gold medal.

In June, 1998, Gebrselassie recorded the 5000-meter world record of 12 minutes, 39.36 seconds in Helsinki, Finland, less than two weeks after he captured the 10,000-meter mark with a time of 26:22.75 in Hengelo, Holland. Using this relaxed stance in racing, he has set 15 world records and won four consecutive world titles in the 10,000 meters, dating back to 1993.

The most overlooked element in athletic training programs also happens to be the most crucial one for good performance - the ability

to relax the mind and body. This is why champion performances look so smooth and effortless. Elite athletes consistently report that the key to smoother, faster training is to focus on being relaxed rather than trying to create more power. Trying to “muscle through” a workout can cause a lack of synchronicity in the muscle groups. For instance, the hamstrings need to be relaxed as the quads are contracting in order to move efficiently.

This can be critical in the last part of a competition when fatigue sets in and the pressure mounts. Remaining loose and calm can make all the difference. It can enhance your ability to perform when it really counts.

The Meaning of Relaxation

Relaxation is an experience. It is a state of physical and mental stillness characterized by the absence of tension and anxiety. It means letting go and sometimes doing absolutely nothing with the mind and muscles.

Although relaxation is one of the more natural and satisfying states that human beings can attain, the feeling of calmness must be experienced to be fully understood.

Two things happen when people discover how to relax. First, there is a physiological response. When I do biofeedback training with my clients, those who are most relaxed go into a slow, deep abdominal breathing pattern, with a decrease in heart rate.

The electromyograph (EMG) shows diminished muscle tension, and the hand thermometer shows warmth, indicating more blood flow to the hands and feet.

Secondly, we find that there is a psychological response. The electroencephalograph (EEG) indicates that relaxed athletes go into an “alpha state,” creating more brain waves in this very creative and healthful state of consciousness.

This state enhances one’s ability to concentrate and move away from anxiety and negative thoughts – a state of mind more conducive to performing well. Relaxation is also an enabling condition. When you are physically and mentally relaxed, you are

empowered to accomplish feats that are not possible at other levels of consciousness.

Why is Relaxation so Essential for Athletes?

When I work with athletes, they often have difficulty with the idea of learning relaxation. They ask: “Why should I want to relax? If I get too calm, I’ll lose the excitement and won’t go fast.” “All those relaxation exercises are boring anyway. My mind is always racing and doesn’t want to go that slow.”

These concerns are characteristic of the “Type A personality,” which describes many athletes quite well. The primary features portray someone who is high achieving, perfectionistic, stoic, independent, and chronically tense.

I often will tell an athlete client: “If you can introduce a new dimension of relaxation to your training program, you won’t be taking anything away from the high achieving part of yourself. On the contrary, you will be adding to it.”

Learning relaxation has many positive rewards that extend far beyond the arena of athletics. You can see gains in every part of your life. Athletes need to clear their minds and calm themselves more completely for a number of reasons:

Recharge the mind: As you learn the art of relaxation, you can quickly discharge any pressure and restore the feelings of excitement and joy about training.

Lower the risk of injury: Injury is often a result of muscle tightness. The healthiest muscles are those that are loose and relaxed.

Prepare for a competition: Calm the mind and conserve energy in the body to perform well in an important event. You need to be fully rested for maximal exertion.

Decrease stress level: Find your optimal arousal level and reduce unnecessary tension and anxiety.

Decrease fatigue: You can often exhaust yourself with the day’s activities. People who are overly anxious are unconsciously

contracting their muscles throughout the day, which slows down the blood flow process for rapid recovery. Periodic relaxation exercises can help you feel recharged and energetic.

Enhance quality of sleep: You reduce your internalized pressure and fall into a deep and restful sleep on the night before a competition or after traveling to a new environment.

Accelerate the natural healing process: During any given winter, chances are high that you will have a flu virus in your body. Yet your own healing system (your immune system) deals with it effectively without your awareness, as long as you are allowing yourself enough relaxation and recovery time.

Repair bone and soft tissue: Running and other weight-bearing activities are high maintenance sports. The body is constantly repairing itself. Broken bones and connective tissue strains can be healed in a shorter time with proper mental relaxation and imagery techniques.

Open and expand your consciousness: Once the mind is fully relaxed, negative thinking and self-criticism are greatly reduced. Thus, the right brain is more open to new ideas, and you can begin to work with visualization techniques in a powerful way. You can create vivid mental images of exactly what you want to happen and increase the chances of turning them into reality.

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CHAPTER 8

PRESENT FOCUS

PART 2

Self Assessment

For Tension and Stress

Tools for Relaxation

**“When you change the way you
breathe, you can change the way
you feel ”**

8. Present Focus – Part 2: Self Assessment for Stress

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

Self-Assessment for Tension and Stress

The key to successful performance in any sport is to recognize the early warning signs of rising stress levels. You need to then take immediate action to bring your stress level down, before your body is screaming at you for attention.

Each person has a characteristic pattern in the response to stress. What system in your body overreacts to pressure? Do you notice any of the following reactions?

- Feeling fatigued
- Racing heart
- Muscle tension in jaw, neck, shoulders
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Stomach upset or vomiting
- Desire to urinate
- Irritability
- Forgetting details
- Inability to focus or make decisions
- Resorting to old habits
- Catching colds frequently

It is important to know your individual response to stressful situations (e.g., a competition) and begin doing relaxation before the symptoms get out of hand.

Tools for Relaxation of the Mind and Body

When Wilson Kipkiter broke the world record twice in the 800 meters at the 1997 World Indoor Championships, his face looked so

peaceful as he was coming around the final turn, you would think he was out for an afternoon stroll. The athletes I work with often report: “Relaxed training seems so easy it hardly feels like you’re working at all.”

With regular practice of breathing and relaxation techniques, you can begin to look and feel like a world-class athlete. Here are some useful strategies to take you to deeper levels of relaxation and higher levels of performance.

After practicing these techniques both at home and during training, your speed workouts will begin to feel easier. You can take your mind off the feeling of tension and fatigue, and move straight into focusing on the task at hand. You’ll look forward to pressure situations as an opportunity to fine-tune your relaxation and have your body and mind perform well when it really counts.

Exercise: Breathing for Accelerated Recovery

Even without your awareness, your breathing plays a significant part in regulating your performance in sports and in life. If you change the way you breathe, you can change the way you feel. Gaining better control of your breathing allows you to take charge of your body and mind.

The pattern of your breathing is quite different when you are tense, nervous, or negative than when you are calm and relaxed. Thus it is important to develop varied patterns of breathing for different purposes. Through proper breathing you can maintain the right balance between attention and relaxation. This balance is critical for precise allocation of energy when training and competing.

Relaxation training should begin with attention to your breathing. Do this exercise for 10 minutes, three times per day, to keep your stress level low and to accelerate recovery time. Begin by finding a quiet place with a comfortable chair where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your pager or phone, close your eyes, and take 10 deep breaths. Place your hand about two inches below the belly button and inhale slowly and deeply.

Imagine that there is a vertical accordion running down your spine. As you breathe in, let the accordion expand outward. After a

pause, begin to slowly exhale and feel the accordion collapsing back down. Pause for a few moments before taking in your next breath. Let your body feel supported by the chair. As each thought comes into your mind, just notice it. With your next exhale, let the thought go and return your focus to your breathing. Let your mind and body be at peace. Give yourself one simple, positive suggestion that you repeat three times. For example: “My mind and body are growing stronger and healthier every day.”

Exercise: Stilling the Mind

Relaxing the mind is just as important as calming the muscles. Athletes need to relax the left-brain – the objective, intellectual part of the mind that is designed for thinking, analyzing, and classifying. This part of the brain is your inner critic, the part that says, “Yeah, but” or “What if.” It often becomes an active resister to progress and can make it difficult to move forward with your training and other parts of your life. When you relax, the left-brain is slowed down, and the right brain becomes more active. The right brain is the creative part that is oriented toward imagery and is more accepting of new ideas.

If you have done the breathing exercise above, your mind has already begun to relax. To further calm the mind, imagine yourself training in your favorite place in nature. Bring your experience into the present tense and use all five of your senses. Hear the sound of the wind and your breathing. Feel your toe pushing off with each step. Feel your body effortlessly floating, as the time passes quickly. It seems as though you could move at this pace for a long time. While inhaling, repeat a simple word, such as “focus.” As you exhale, say a word that helps you relax, like “calm.” This will take your mind away from negative thoughts and will bring you into a peaceful state of consciousness. Then you can create a mental picture of your best competition experience and see it exactly the way you want it to happen.

Muscle Awareness Exercise

Try monitoring the muscle tension levels that accompany many common activities during the course of your day. Notice how you hold your wrists and shoulders while typing at the computer. How tightly are you gripping the steering wheel while driving? What muscles are you using to hold the phone; is your neck crimped? How tight are your neck and shoulders while doing your last interval of your workout? We frequently use far more muscle power than is needed to accomplish a task effectively. When athletes “muscle through” a workout, the body’s natural timing, flow, and rhythm are blocked. The movement becomes jerky and uncoordinated, and fatigue can develop more quickly.

The goal in this exercise is to match the effort with the task. Top athletes are skilled in detecting subtle differences in tension levels and fine-tuning their responses. So adjust your muscle tension to whatever job you are doing. Relax the muscles that are not needed for that task.

CHAPTER 9

PRODUCTIVE MINDSET

Confidence & Motivation Tools

**“Goals provide direction
for your
training and your life”**

9. Productive Mindset Confidence & Motivation Tools

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

Did you know that potentially negative events can be turned into positive ones, simply by observing them from a new perspective? You may not have complete control over the situation, but you do have control over your reaction to it.

If your workout or event is delayed, you can complain about having to wait, or you can be grateful for the extra time to relax, stretch and prepare mentally. If you feel tired during a workout, you can be angry at your body, or you can view it as an important message and honor your body's need to rest. Any situation can appear negative or positive depending on where you choose to focus.

When you are training, where do you place your focus of attention and your energy? Are you often drawn into unconstructive or pessimistic thinking? It's surprising what you can do when you tune your mind to a positive channel. It's like trying on new glasses. You can observe things that you haven't noticed for a long time, and experience them with a greater appreciation.

Perception Exercise

Try putting on your "new set of glasses" this morning, and see how many positive things you can experience. As you go out for your trail run or walk, for instance, begin to open your senses. You can walk out your door and feel the crisp morning air, listen to the wind and birds, smell the trees and flowers, and watch the shapes of the clouds changing. As you stretch and begin to move, you can feel your muscles warming up.

Other people may have begun their workout and missed out on all of these benefits because they had blinders on and they were not able to perceive the positive energy around them. A continuous pattern of negative thinking can present obstacles, exhaust your energy, and take the pleasure out of your activities. Keeping a positive state of mind can create new possibilities, build motivation, and provide a sense of empowerment for your training and your life.

Power Words To Change Perspective

You can carry a positive perspective with you during most all of your workouts and events regardless of the external conditions. When you bike on a flat training course, you can work on your speed. If you come to a hill, you can say, “The hills are my friends, they are making me stronger.”

If you are swimming in calm water, these conditions can help you go faster. If the ocean is choppy, this can also be a positive experience. You can say: “I am going with the rhythm of each wave. I have an advantage in choppy water.” If you are running with a tailwind, you can feel its energy pushing you along.

If you turn the corner into a headwind, you can still remain positive and say: “The wind is helping my running form as I lean into the wind. It keeps my body cool.” A calm day is good too, as it allows you to appreciate the serenity of a peaceful afternoon. You can draw something positive from each day and let every experience become a victory.

Switching Gears

The brain has an extensive range of speeds and gears – distracted and focused gears, nervous and relaxed gears, negative and positive gears. You can choose where to put your focus at any point throughout the day.

The ability to switch channels is fully within your control. If you fall into a negative mode of thinking and would like to move into a more

constructive one, you can shift gears by attending to something more calming and reassuring, or engaging in something rewarding.

You might ask yourself: “Am I approaching this situation with the best possible attitude? If not, one question to ask is: “Can I find something good in this event? What IS working?” Or you can ask, “What do I need to learn from this?” You can find something positive in most situations if you observe carefully and commit yourself to discovering it.

When seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong came to San Francisco for the Grand Prix cycling series, I asked him: “Lance I know that coming back from cancer has made you mentally tough. How has that experience helped you remain positive in your training and racing?”

He told me: “Whenever I feel like I’m having a bad day out there on the bike, I think back to Indianapolis in ’96 and ’97, when the cancer was in its worse stages, and it puts life into perspective. I realize that things aren’t so bad. Coming from that experience, I can keep a positive outlook and handle any workout.”

The world’s best athletes find opportunities in almost every conceivable situation. Out of adversity they find reasons to be enthusiastic and forward moving. You can learn to adopt the same strategies as these champions. The key is to develop a positive perspective that allows you to find the advantage in everything.

There are a variety of powerful techniques to prompt and maintain a positive attitude. You can fill your environment with images of your goals and aspirations.

When champion marathoner Ingrid Kristiansen wanted to run as fast as the Olympic gold medalist Joan Benoit Samuelson, she put up a poster of Joan in front of her treadmill, and focused on her image every day as she trained. Ingrid subsequently broke the world record in the marathon.

Exercise: Cues for Positive Energy

What can you do to bring more positive energy into your training? You can write down ten of your favorite power words (positive self-statements) and post them on your desk, computer, mirror, or nightstand. Position them where you can view them every day. You can also put up inspirational quotations, or reminders of your short-term and long-term goals. Keep a logbook of your progress and reward yourself even for small steps toward your achievements. The important thing is to surround yourself with positive cues for success and fulfillment. Once you begin this process, you will be able switch into a positive gear and remain grounded there most of the time.

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CHAPTER 10

PRODUCTIVE MINDSET

Part 2

Positive Perspective Tools

“Try putting on your ‘new set of glasses’ this morning, and see how many positive things you can experience”

10. Productive Mindset – Part 2

Positive Perspective Tools

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

As we saw in last month's article, the way in which you view a situation has a tremendous impact on your performance. You may not have complete control over the situation, but you do have control over your reaction to it. Negative thought patterns can present obstacles, exhaust your energy, and take the pleasure out of your activities.

Keeping a positive state of mind can create new possibilities, build motivation, and provide a sense of empowerment for your training and your life. Any situation can appear negative or positive depending on where you choose to focus.

Many of your challenges in training and racing can be handled successfully by changing your focus from negative to positive - from problems to solutions. Personal growth and fulfillment comes from allowing yourself to make a meaningful change in your focus of attention.

How many times in your training have you let your fear or dislike of something take away the pleasure from your workout? Notice what happens in your body when you consistently say to yourself: "I run poorly in the rain," "I hate these long track intervals," "I can't stand biking up the hills," "I'm worried that I won't make it to the finish line of the race."

However, if you can simply change the statements to: "I am enjoying the challenge of these intervals," "These hills are developing my strength and increasing my aerobic capacity," "I love training in the fresh air and the rain," you'll free your body to perform with ease and grace.

Turning Negatives Into Positives

Creating a positive attitude does not mean ignoring life's difficulties and obstacles. There are certain times when we must all perform in the face of adversity. Sometimes you can eliminate the obstacles or remove yourself from a negative situation.

Other times you need to figure out how to do your best in spite of the obstacles. You may not be able to control the external conditions, but you still have power over what you focus on within a given situation. At the starting line of a **race**, you can place your attention on the headwind and pouring rain, or you can focus on what you need to do to perform your best, regardless of the weather.

Are You In Good Company?

Even within an environment of negativity, you can choose to focus on something positive. You can decide each morning to create a healthy self-image and to find something positive in your training partners. If the people around you are negative, you can view this as a challenge to stay positive. Focus your time and attention on positive interactions. Spend the majority of your time around supportive people who share your vision.

Know What You Can Control

Avoid wasting energy pondering about things that are beyond your control. Focus on those things you can do that will bring you closer to your goals. Work on those areas that are important to you, but understand that some factors cannot be changed. Realize that many challenges you are going through are being faced by others as well. The distinguishing factor here is how you deal with them mentally. As you learn to embrace these tests and approach obstacles with a positive attitude, you'll come closer to realizing your full potential.

Injuries Are Teachers

Even under adverse conditions, champion athletes find reasons to be optimistic and confident. They see that life's difficulties can often become lessons that show us how to move forward. You can use the same principle as these champions. One athlete that I worked with recently had two knee surgeries and a back injury over the last three years. He told me, "Every time I have come back from an injury, it has made me a better person and a stronger athlete. I have learned to truly appreciate my health and enjoy my running."

Everything that occurs in life has a potentially negative and a positive side. Notice how much better you feel when you focus on what you have rather than what you've lost. High quality performances come from making your training and living environment more positive. Strive to find opportunities within each situation you face.

Exercise for Positive Vision:

Take a piece of paper and draw a vertical line down the middle. At the top of the left column, write "Negative Thoughts." At the top of the right column, write, "Positive Reframing." Keep this paper with you and each time you notice a negative thought, belief, or attitude write it down in the left column. The act of writing down your negative thoughts will make you more aware of them, and will prevent them from leading you into a negative pattern or depressed mood. Then, in the right column, generate several ways to counteract those thoughts and reframe them using positive self-statements. Example: Negative thought: "I'm never going to get faster." Positive reframing: "As I train, my body and mind are growing stronger and healthier every day."

Powerful Words for Motivation

My mind is open to new possibilities.

I see the positive side for everything that happens.

I can easily turn negatives into positives.

There are no limits to my imagination.

I am choosing to do my best effort every day.

I have a healthy, positive self-image.

I am a strong, powerful, determined athlete.

I can see it, and I will achieve it.

I believe in myself: I radiate confidence and energy.

I train well no matter what the conditions.

I focus intensely on my goal even in the face of obstacles.

My goals are well within my capabilities.

Where my mind goes, my energy flows.

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CHAPTER 11

PERFORMING EDGE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Sports Psychology Performance Coach Certification Introductory Training

**For Athletes, Coaches, Psychologists,
Students, Life Coaches, Health
Professionals and High Level Achievers**

Olympic Thinking Mindset Tools

<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>

11. Sports Psychology Performance Coach Professional Training for High Achievers

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

COACH GOALS QUESTIONNAIRE PECI Coach Pre-Questionnaire

I'm looking forward to working with you, and helping you to be very successful through our coach certification program, if you are interested in learning more, taking sports psychology to the next level, and joining us.

If you can please answer these questions below,

this will help me get to know you, understand your goals, and challenges, and customize your coaching and training program for your exact needs.

If you can please email me your responses at

info@DrJoAnn.com Thank you.

SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY COACHING QUESTIONS

What is important to me about having a profitable sports psychology career or coaching practice/business?

How will my life be different when solid profits are coming in on a regular basis from my sports psychology coaching, doing what I'm passionate about?

Tell me about your vision as a coach?

What would you like your "Ideal sports psychology career, coaching practice or

business" to look like? What would you like to happen?

As a coach/practitioner/professional, what are the top 3 things you struggle with the most?

What top 5-10 components and topics would you like included in this Coach Certification

training?

What skills - techniques would you like to learn? What are the gaps that you

need filled?

Tell me about your successes or peak performances as a coach/practitioner/professional or athlete?

As a coach, entrepreneur, or athlete. what are your 3-5 biggest stresses currently in

your current work or practice/business?

Who are your ideal clients that you would like to work with?

What would you like to walk away with as a graduate of this program?

Tell me about your most difficult clients or athletes to work with?

What are your most common client or athlete problems?

What do you need my help with most as your sports psychologist expert?

What are your specific goals as a coach/practitioner?

What top 3 barriers/obstacles are holding you back from your goals?

What mental training strategies have you tried in the past as an athlete or coach?

What has worked well?

What hasn't worked well?

As a Performing Edge Coach in training, what do you

anticipate would be your 3-5 biggest challenges in the future?

As a professional coach, entrepreneur, and/or athlete, what are your 3-5

most burning questions you've always wanted to ask a person like me?

What other questions do you have for me about the certification/mentorship

program?

Thanks for your time in responding to this questionnaire, which will help me get to know your goals and help you with your exact needs.

I look forward to talking with you,

For more information about how you can get into sports psychology as a career, practice, or business, go to:

<http://www.PerformingEdgeCoach.com/sports>

Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter

Positive Coaching: Putting Performance in Perspective – for Coaches and Sports Parents

**By Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, Founder of Sports Psychology
Coach Certification International
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)**

Coaches need to read their athletes correctly and understand them for who they are

Sports provide a wonderful training ground for developing one's self-confidence, determination, and inner strength. Individuals can learn **leadership skills, competitiveness, cooperativeness, and self-discipline** in addition to attaining physical fitness. However, athletics can also become a negative experience for some people if they do not receive the right kind of emotional support from a coach or trainer. Coaches and parents need to be sensitive to the impact that sports experiences can have on their athletes' self-concept and self-esteem.

Coaches and parents need to understand that the lessons gained from athletics are frequently carried over into the rest of a person's life. For instance, the sports setting provides continuous opportunities for comparing oneself with others. People notice how others respond to their performance. The critical reactions of coaches, friends, teammates, opponents, and spectators are often highly visible and are directly felt. Even the more subtle reactions, although unintentionally displayed, are easily picked up by the athlete. The negative reactions over time can have a deep, long-lasting impact, especially on athletes who are emotionally fragile and sensitive to criticism. The process of self-comparison and taking in feedback or criticism from others occurs in any situation where there is human interaction. However, the effects can be softened and viewed more realistically when an understanding

coach helps the athlete place the competitive experience in proper perspective.

In fact, the greatest contribution that a coach can provide for athletes in this regard is character building. The best educator of character is the athletic field. In addition to encouraging physical fitness, coaches are in a powerful position to foster psychological skills as well. This teaching might involve developing **self-assurance, discipline, courage, ability to handle adversity, and leadership skills**. Coaches have a unique opportunity to support athletes in their personal growth and development.

However, instead of developing character, many coaches are focused solely on the idea of winning – that is, the professional model. A win-at-all-costs philosophy is required for advancement of coaches in most institutions, and in fact for mere survival. Professional coaches do not receive many honors for developing character. Their primary function is to compete successfully for tangible rewards. Their value is based on how much they contribute to winning and profit-making for their teams. In fact, many of the problems in sports occur when uninformed coaches incorrectly impose this professional model on what should be an enjoyable and educational experience for athletes.

Common Coaching Mistakes

- Overreacting when the athlete makes an error or doesn't perform up to expectations
- Demanding too much time or commitment from athletes so that they are overtrained, burned out, or continually injured
- Giving an inordinate amount of attention to “the star” and ignoring the value of other team members
- Keeping the pressure on so every practice becomes a “life-or-death” situation; requiring that every athlete improve by a certain amount each day
- Not respecting that the athlete needs to have balance in his or her life - time for school, work, family, relaxation

- Overemphasizing body weight with female athletes, often leading to self-image problems or a serious eating disorder
- Mistreating or demeaning the athlete for being lazy, not trying, or not placing high enough
- Engaging in inappropriate behavior: harassing of officials or opponents or using profanity
- Losing perspective of the purpose of sports and being preoccupied with winning, putting the athletes under additional stress

An extreme example of the loss of perspective in athletics comes from the increasing reports of anger and violence occurring during sports events. Take the sportsmanship out of the athletic arena and what's left is sports rage. In Florida, for instance, an assistant coach of a youth baseball team punched an umpire and broke his jaw. In Massachusetts, a father was beaten to death by another father who was upset over aggressive play between their kids during a hockey practice. In a San Diego gym, a man died after being struck in a basketball game while another man lost the use of his left eye in the same fight.

Of course, there have always been occasional elbows thrown by athletes and coaches who think this type of gesturing gives them an edge on the competition. But anecdotal evidence indicates there is an increase in the frequency and severity of explosiveness among both adult and young recreational athletes as well as their coaches and parents. Currently there are no reliable figures to objectively measure the amount of sports violence, since most conflicts are handled between players and are not reported to the authorities. However, one spokesperson for the Wisconsin-based National Association of Sports Officials insists that amateur sports are out of control. Both kids and adults are acting out their aggression much more now than in the past. We frequently see pushing, shoving, and head butting. Athletes see it going on between the pros on television and they think it must be acceptable.

Many coaches are no longer spending the time to teach sportsmanship but are more focused on doing whatever it takes to win. Whereas fighting off the field can result in jail time, assaults within the sports arena are often condoned, and players are only benched or suspended temporarily. The sports violence goes far deeper than anger over a disputed play or a bad call by a referee. The individuals who resort to violence are often frustrated about how they are being treated at home, at work, at school, or by their coaches.

What Makes Athletes Angry and Frustrated?

- An atmosphere of continuous negativity during workouts
- Coaches who don't know how to listen or give constructive feedback
- Being singled out as the cause for the team's failure
- Seeing the "star" athlete regularly receive most of the attention and praise
- Not being appreciated for the hard work and extra hours they are contributing
- Not being allowed to rest and recover adequately from workouts
- Feeling the constant pressure to win and be number one

How to Develop Well-Balanced Athletes

Given this information, what can coaches do to make sports a more positive experience for athletes? Coaches need to place training and competing in a healthy perspective and acknowledge that learning comes from both winning and losing. Athletes need to be taught that success is found in **striving** for the win, not in the outcome itself. The only element that athletes have complete control over is in the amount of **effort** they put forth. They have only a limited amount of influence on the final results of the competition. Outcomes depend upon the fitness of the other athletes, the weather conditions, and countless other factors. Coaches need to impress upon their athletes that they are never

losers if they give maximum effort. In this way they are teaching them a valuable lesson that they can use throughout their life's endeavors.

What Coaches and Parents Can Do

Communicate unconditional acceptance:

Provide a basis for positive self-concept by sending a message that each athlete has value whether that individual is a star or a bench warmer.

The achievement standards set should be within the athlete's capabilities:

Enjoy the successes that occur and express appreciation for the effort that went into it. Never be punitive or rejecting if the athlete tries but does not succeed. If you want your athlete to avoid fear of failure, do not give him or her a reason to dread failure.

Stress improvement of individual skills rather than comparison to others:

Physical growth and skill development occur at different rates for each person. Help every athlete derive pleasure from self-improvement over time, even if the person will never be an Olympian.

Know what level of direction to provide for each athlete:

Avoid under or over-coaching. Some athletes need strong guidance. Others are more self-directed and only need a consultant.

Emphasize fun, participation, and skill improvement rather than winning and losing:

Most people participate in a sport because they enjoy doing the activity for its own sake. The material rewards should be secondary.

After a tough loss listen, support, understand, and praise:

Provide an accepting environment for the athlete to fully feel and express the emotion after the event. Respect and accept those feelings. Do not deny or distort what the athlete is feeling. Do not say, "You did great", when he knows he didn't. Instead, point out something positive that was achieved during the competition (e.g. "You maintained good running form throughout").

Focus on the important lessons of life that can be learned (e.g. being mentally strong in the face of adversity, self-discipline, patience, cooperation). Look forward to achieving future goals.

The purpose of an athletic program should be to teach the individual the lessons of training, competition, winning and losing, and skills for handling any situation that may surface. Coaches should emphasize participation, doing one's best, and letting the activity be its own reward. Every competition will have a winner and loser.

The successful program will have a coach who accepts the losing along with the winning, and will be able to congratulate each person for their

efforts. Properly managed, a sports program can be an important training ground for athletes to develop a positive self-image. Athletes can then use the lessons of sport for competing successfully in other areas of life.

Interview with Payton Jordan, U.S. Olympic Coach

Payton Jordan, head coach for the U.S. Olympic team in 1968, provides an excellent example of positive coaching. As one of the world's most respected track and field coaches, his '68 team won more Olympic medals and established more records than any other team in history. He then coached the track and field team at Stanford University for 28 years.

Jordan is also an extraordinary role model for strength and longevity in sport, as he continues to set world masters track records at age 83. Ever since his first race as a 13-year-old at Pasadena Junior High, he has pursued excellence in every aspect of life. In 1939 he was captain for University of Southern California's championship track and field team, and made the cover of Life Magazine. In 1941 he ran 9.5 seconds and set a world record for the 100-yard dash on a grass track – a mark that stood for 27 years.

Thirty years later, in 1972, Jordan was the fastest 55-year-old at 100 meters, posting a time of 11.6. He went on to set world masters records at 100 and 200 meters for the next 25 years. At age 81, he ran 100 meters in 14.52 – a time that, adjusted for age, was a hundredth of a second faster than Donovan Bailey's world record mark of 9.84 seconds. Jordan has coached and competed at world-class levels for more than 70 years. His achievements have earned him a collection of Hall of Fame honors.

When I called Payton to arrange for an interview, he said: "I'm not sure if I can meet with you until next week because I'm taking care of my wife (Payton said they have been married for 60 years). You see my wife and I were out surfing in Santa Barbara last week and a big

wave injured her shoulder.” The idea of surfing at age 83 gives testimony to how well he has taken care of himself over the years.

JoAnn Dahlkoetter: What elements do you feel are most essential in the psychology of coaching?

Payton Jordan: As a coach, I believe you need to make the activity exciting, interesting, and colorful for athletes. You add to the performance if you do that. You need to make them feel that what they are doing is important. If a person is not inspired, if he doesn't feel there's something special about his sport, he won't perform as well.

This is a part of a motivational tactic that I use in coaching kids. I feel that every kid is important. When you approach a person with an idea, it may sound the same or look the same for each person, but it isn't the same. It's for that person alone. Each athlete needs special attention. The coach can initiate the motivation, but the true action needs to be taken by the individual. The coach starts the fire; then the athlete stokes it.

JD: Through your coaching experience what have you learned about the mind and motivation of athletes?

PJ: I have retired now as a coach, but I don't think you ever really retire, because you are a source of information that can be passed on. People reinvent the wheel all the time. From my standpoint I hear things today that people think are amazingly new, and strangely to me they're not new at all. What puzzles me is when people think they've got the only answer that ever came along. And I think to myself, “Where were you 50 years ago? Were you there to hear that same thing?”

The fundamental concepts of human nature, like the psychology of sports and motivation, really haven't changed a great deal. Even in the early days when people were not so sophisticated, the same things have motivated people in many ways.

Maybe they didn't have the same eloquent language to describe them, but people were still driven to be the best that they could be. You had those that rose to the top, those that stayed at the bottom, and those that stayed in the middle. And most of that comes from one's mental attitude.

Most people say, it's OK if I'm in the middle. They're satisfied with that – no commitment and no worry. But then there's the guy who wants to be at the top of the pile, and he is willing to make the commitment. The first step to success is commitment.

JD: Did you find yourself striving to be at the top as a young athlete?

PJ: Sure, whenever I signed up for a race I made a commitment to do my best. I also never thought about breaking a record, but I always knew what that record was. I would say, "That I must strive to reach." And I knew that this would take discipline. If I didn't have the discipline, I wouldn't care enough.

Coaches come into the picture here when the discipline is not strong enough in an athlete, and it needs to be reinforced. Then, the second part of discipline is motivation – making people believe and want to reach their goals. In this way the discipline becomes soft and comfortable.

But if you scream at people, it won't work. I'm always surprised that screamers think they are getting better action. Talking to people, showing people, leading people, and encouraging people is much more important than the whipping, the fighting, and the threatening.

There are times to be very firm, but most of the time you get a lot more done by saying, "Hey, this is going to be fun, isn't it? We are going to get this done." Then the athlete becomes open and starts to dream a little bit. They start to set some goals.

You've got to be careful you don't let them go out too far too soon with their goals, where they get shot down or embarrassed. You should make the goals realistic and attainable. Then you stretch them; you stretch those goals all the time, trying to get people to up their target.

JD: Tell me about your experience as U.S. track and field coach for the 1968 Olympics.

PJ: I had an awful lot of great athletes. Many of them would have done well in spite of any coaching. But surprisingly, some of the greatest champions are seeking coaching and hoping someone will care enough to say, "This is what is happening; this is what will help you."

We oftentimes think the successful person does not need any support system. Yet the true champions are the most coachable athletes – they are the most open to gaining feedback. A great athlete doesn't need a whole lot of coaching. He or she needs only a little molding, reinforcement, and motivation.

Al Oerter, the four-time Olympic gold medal winner in the discus throw (1956, 1960, 1964, 1968), was one of the greatest athletes of all time. Just think of the dedication, the motivation, and the discipline to go four times.

That's 12 years of being at the top of your game every year that the Olympics came around. I coached him in '64 and in '68. He had worked with another coach earlier. When I coached him, in a sense I may have saved him from fading. If he had not been caught a couple of times when he needed help, he may not have gotten the job done. He said to me, "You motivated me when I needed it the most." He told people, "You always knew that coach Jordan would kick you in the butt to get the job done, but he always cared."

JD: So would you say a great coach needs both of those qualities – discipline and concern?

PJ: Yes, you've got to care about the kid; you can't be worried about yourself and your reputation or how great you are. The mistake many coaches sometimes make is that they think they're more valuable than they really are. Coaches can become very important in an athlete's life; they're like a father figure. Kids come to you with all the baggage and hang-ups of their families.

The suspicions they have of their mother or their father, the resistance they have to their mother or their father all get dumped right on you. And you get 60-80 of those kids with all their problems. You have to be very careful that you read them right and try to take them for what they are. Then try to bring them to where they need to be for the best personal result.

So it's not wise to yell or demand or ridicule. Because a kid who is sensitive doesn't understand why he is being beaten on when he really wants to perform well, but he doesn't know how. He needs to be shown how, then reinforced and complimented. He has to have someone motivating him to go for more.

He needs to learn when to work hard and when to work less. It's just as important to understand when not to work as when to work hard. And you can spend a lot of time working at something that doesn't have anything to do with success. That's where the coaching experience comes into the picture.

JD: Can you give an example of how you would motivate an athlete?

PJ: I do it with a lot of talk and reinforcement. I get them to say something, then I try to put their experience into a positive perspective. Everything needs to be upbeat. If there's a mistake, I don't dwell on the mistake. For instance, I would say, "You're pretty darn good here; now if we can get rid of this over here, we can really get it done."

You try to build on their strengths and push the mistake away. If you dwell on the negative, the athlete closes up like a clam, but he really opens up when you compliment and support him. He might have resisted you earlier, but now he begins to listen. The improvement will come more quickly when you have this trusting relationship.

JD: Talk about your association with Jesse Owens. When did you compete against him?

PJ: I ran against him in the 100 yards when I was a kid and he was a young man. That was before we had the 100-meter races. He was four years older than I was. I was a freshman at USC; he was a senior at Ohio State.

We ran in races together a couple of times in the LA Coliseum, and we became good friends. I greatly admired him. I knew he was the greatest sprinter in the world at the time. When you go to a track meet as a 17-year-old kid and you're standing next to a 25-year-old man, the best in the world, and you step up to the starting line, you really stop and think.

Whenever we raced, I saw his back, and I wasn't the only one. There were a lot of people who never got to see anything but his back.

You just knew when you were around Jesse, the aura of confidence, preparation, and commitment. It exuded from him; you felt it. Some people just walk up to the starting line and you know they are there.

They can put the hex on you real quick without saying a word. I know that a good athlete puts out some kind of psychological aura. The radar gets picked up among other athletes. You sense it; you know the guy is gonna do the job. You know that you can't take him lightly. You know you're gonna pay dearly if you do. And that guy is difficult to be around. He just makes you feel: "Well, I guess I'm going to be running for second."

Jesse Owens had that confident quality; it's just the way he carried himself, but never with arrogance. He was gracious; he never looked down at you. Of course he later went on to win four gold medals in the Berlin Olympics. He is looked upon as one of the greatest athletes of all time. He probably has had the strongest influence on track and field of any track athlete in the Olympic games. He raced and won in front of Hitler, when Hitler was trying to make a case for the Aryan supremacy of Nazi Germany. Jesse Owens just flaunted it in front of his face. He ran those gold medals right out of the stadium. It was a great accomplishment.

But most of all he was a good person, a great friend, and a guy that I thought a great deal of.

JD: Did you have dreams of being able to run as fast as Jesse Owens?

PJ: When I was racing with Jesse, I wasn't really ready to be in that league with him; I was too young. When you get a little older and stronger with more experience, then you don't back off in races.

But when you're young, you still have doubts. You need more reinforcement, more good training, more nurturing and direction. However, it doesn't come quickly for everybody. Some people have to work a long, long time before they can become a champion.

I remember I was at a clinic one time when Jesse was speaking. There were a lot of young kids in the room. One of the kids said, "Yeah, but Mr. Owens, you're just a natural athlete." Jesse said, "Wait a minute, son, you only become a natural athlete when you've worked very, very hard.

Each of you has the opportunity. It's there for you to grab on to. But it's up to you, and it's going to be hard work, but you'll enjoy it." In fact, the first guy that called me when I became the Olympic coach was Jesse Owens.

He said, “Payton, I’m so glad you’re going to be our Olympic coach. If there is anything I can do for you, let me know.” I said, “Jesse, I would like you to come and speak to our first team meeting at the Olympics.” And he did. He said to the group, “Coach Jordan is the right guy because he knows how to relate to people.” You know, we had a lot of turmoil in the Olympics in ’68 with the black power movement and all that, and yet we overcame it.

We had what they called the greatest Olympic team in history, with more medals and more Olympic and American records than any other team in history. It was a team that was totally dedicated and motivated. They were ready to go in spite of all the distractions. For me it was a fantastic moment to have that kind of group of people to work with.

JD: What advice would you give today’s coaches?

PJ: The important thing to remember is that athletes are human. They need a lot of nurturing instead of pressuring or pushing. Coaches need to create opportunities, to clear the path for the athlete to succeed.

Athletes need to have the peace of mind that they can trust their coach and know they will not feel threatened. People often fear that they will fail. It is crucial for coaches to teach their athletes that a mistake is not a failure; it’s just another step on the road toward success.

JD: You have accomplished so much, and you are a wonderful role model for other coaches and athletes. You appear to be very satisfied with your life.

PJ: Yes, I think of all the kids I have coached over the years. I know 15 of them now have their own children named after me. I have actively competed in track from age 13 to 83. They say that no other track athlete in history has ever had as long a career at world-class level as a sprinter (from 1936-2001). My family has been a wonderful support system.

I've had 60 great years of marriage, with two children, four grandchildren, and one great grandchild. You could say I've had a hell of a good run.

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I hope you've enjoyed this book, and I look forward to you reading my next book called "Gold Medal Mindset".

To find out more about my upcoming book, email me at info@DrJoAnn.com

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CHAPTER 12

Olympic Thinking

Top 10 Tips

Mind-Body Performance Tools

**“Mental Management is the key
to Performance Success”**

12. Your Performing Edge: Top 10 Tips

Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter - www.DrJoAnn.com

10. POSITIVE IMAGES: Use your mental images throughout your event or workout to create feelings of speed and power. (e.g., If you're walking or running and you come to an unexpected hill visualize a magnet pulling you effortlessly to the top). Use visualization before, during and after your training to build confidence and new motivation.

9. POWER WORDS: Make positive self-statements continually. Be aware of your negative thoughts early on. Don't fight with them; simply acknowledge their presence, and then substitute positive power words. (e.g., When you're thinking: "This hurts too much, I want to lie down and die"; say to yourself: "This feeling is connected with getting healthier and doing my absolute best").

8. PRESENT FOCUS: Practice being in the present moment. Be Right On – Right Here – Right Now. Remind yourself to stay in the here and now. Let past and future events fade into the background. Remember, the only moment we can do anything about is the one we're in right now.

7. ADVANTAGE: Use everything in the workout to your advantage. For example, if another person passes you, tuck in behind and go with his or her energy for as long as possible. You may catch a "second wind" and be carried on to a personal record.

6. CHUNKING-GOALS: Focus on your immediate target. Break your training goals down into small, manageable pieces and begin to focus only on the first portion, not the entire practice (e.g., Say to yourself: "I'm just relaxing and getting my rhythm during the first part, or the first workout session").

5. BODY SCAN: Pay close attention to your tension level and training form. Do a body scan while working out and relax your tight muscles frequently. Ask yourself: "Are my shoulders and

neck relaxed; how does this pace feel; how much energy is left in my legs?”

4. PAIN AS EFFORT: If you have “good pain” that is not seriously damaging your body, just shift attention to your breathing or cadence of movement, and let the discomfort fade into the background. You can also use the pain as feedback. Register it not as pain but as effort level. Say: “Now I know exactly how hard I’m working. I know how this pace feels. My body is doing what it should be doing.”

Would you like to learn my other three tips? You can!

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Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, is CEO and founder of **Performing Edge Coaching International Association**,
(<http://www.SportsPsychologyCertification.com>)

Certification Training Program for coaches.

She is founder of <http://www.DrJoAnn.com> the premiere sports psychology resource for athletes, coaches and sports parents.

Dr. JoAnn is author of 17 books including the #1 national bestseller **“Sports Psychology Coaching for Your Performing Edge”** (<http://www.drjoann.com/products/book/>) on OPRAH and NBC-TV, Stanford Performance Consultant, sports psychologist to OLYMPIC Gold Medalists and CEOs, winner of the San Francisco Marathon and 2nd in the World Championship Hawaii Ironman Triathlon. She is an internationally recognized Olympic Keynote Speaker, columnist, and TV expert commentator.

Dr. JoAnn provides performance psychology, corporate training, and Performing Edge Coach Certification programs for CEO’s, coaches, sports parents and athletes to reach their highest potential in sports, business and life. Call 650-654-5500 to have your custom peak performance MP3 audio created for your exact needs.
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About the Author

Dr. JoAnn Dahlkoetter, best-selling author of *Your Performing Edge*, is an internationally recognized keynote speaker and world-class athlete. She has been on the medical staff at Stanford University Medical Center for 10 years and is a licensed psychologist. She is winner of the San Francisco Marathon in 2:43:20, placed 2nd in the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon, and was rated the No. 1 triathlete in the U.S. by *Triathlete Magazine*. Dr. Dahlkoetter has appeared on ABC's *Wide World of Sports* and NBC's *Sports World*. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* and *Runner's World*, and she has been featured in *USA Today*, *Time Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek* and *Sports Illustrated*. She is currently a contributor to several national magazines, including *Triathlete Magazine* and *Running Times*.

Dr. Dahlkoetter is a Diplomate in the field of Performance Psychology and Sports Psychology. In her 30 years of clinical practice she has worked with numerous Olympic and professional athletes, CEO's, performing artists, and those in high stress careers. She has been on the faculty at the University of California at Berkeley, and she frequently conducts workshops for corporations, universities, and sports clinics worldwide. She currently maintains a full-time consulting practice and continues to train and race in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her work with Olympic athletes and top-level business executives gives her special insight into using the mind-body connection to achieve the best in personal performance. Her work includes:

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CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

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Tom is my top mentor and business coach I depend upon for creating the professional image I need to be a successful entrepreneur.

Dr. Robert Plant, D.D.S. – Dentist (650) 367-0562

<http://www.robertplantdds.com/>

Dr. Plant has been my personal dentist for over 20 years. He is also a world class triathlete and knows how to take good care of your teeth.

Dr. Les Waddel D.C. - Chiropractor (800) 871-7970

<http://www.docwaddel.com>

Dr. Waddel has been my sports chiropractor for 30 years. He is an experienced triathlete and knows how to take care of athletes' needs.

Dr. William Dunbar, M.D. - Orthopedic Surgeon (805) 963-2729

<http://santabarbaraorthopedicsurgery.com/>

Dr. Dunbar is my Orthopedic surgeon, who performed surgery on my fractured hip following my bicycle accident in 2011. Now I'm back to successful racing again, getting faster every day.

Dr. John Moore D.C. - Chiropractor (650) 851-4860

Dr. Moore has been my sports chiropractor for 20 years. He has worked with the Olympic team athletes and understands athletes' needs.

Dr. Sunny Young D.D.S. - Endodontics (650) 568-9889

Dr. Young has an Endodontics practice, and does outstanding work with root canals. He provides treatment for my teeth with great success.

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