

THE CONFIDENT FIGURE SKATER

CD AND WORKBOOK PROGRAM

MENTAL GAME
STRATEGIES
FOR PEAK
PERFORMANCE



PATRICK J. COHN, PH.D. WITH ASHLEY GLASSCO

The Confident Figure Skater: Mental Game Strategies For Peak Performance

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Forward by Ashley Glassco

When I was in 7th grade, my figure skating career became more serious for me. I felt more pressure in competition. Competing had more significance because I was entering the levels where I had the chance to qualify for provincial and national competitions.

I did not understand the importance of the mental game at that time. The stress I felt about competing was hurting my performance. I trained hard on the ice every day, and I had the skills. I also used a personal trainer, so I knew my physical strength was in good condition. This left me wondering: "Why am I still competing worse than practice?"

The answer to this question was right in front of me. I soon discovered that I worried about what other skaters and coaches thought about me during practices, especially when I was training at a national training centre. The fact that Olympians trained at the same ice rink made me feel like I had to skate my best and not make mistakes. When my coach told me to visualize my programs, I would imagine myself falling or messing up.

I also felt pressure to reach both my parents and my own expectations. My confidence was low due to my high expectations. I put my competitors on pedestals above me. I beat myself up after bad competitions. I was scared to do well because that would raise my parent's expectations of me, it was easier to flop out and ruin my programs. All of these factors brought one conclusion to my problem...

I needed to improve my mental toughness. My mental game was not strong enough to help me succeed and perform my best at competitions. This is when my mother and I contacted Dr. Patrick Cohn.

At first, I didn't think I needed to do mental training—I thought my mental game and confidence were not the problem. During my first talk with him, Dr. Cohn asked me multiple questions about my mental game like: what I thought about during competitions, if I had expectations, if I dwelled on mistakes, etc. I thought I had all the right answers. I thought he would tell me I didn't need to improve my mental game, but I was completely wrong. I needed mental coaching badly.

After working with Dr. Cohn for a few months I realized that my mental game was not as good as I thought it was and I had a lot of work to do. Like many other figure skaters, I was a perfectionist. We're taught to strive for perfection in our skills and programs every day. Once I realized how this type of thinking was hurting my performance, I worked hard to overcome the problems with perfectionism.

Making changes was not a simple process, as it required a lot of work on my mental game. We worked on replacing expectations with goals and process goals, focusing on the process and not the results, how to let go of mistakes, building confidence, and other aspects that helped me manage the perfectionism.

By working on my mental game, I began to notice my performance improving at competitions and shows. Managing the perfectionism helped my mental game a lot, but it was just the beginning...

Introduction

Welcome to “The Confident Skater!” This workbook and audio program is specifically designed for competitive figure skaters who want to improve confidence, composure, and overall mental toughness. If you’re serious about taking your performance to the next level, you’ve come to the right place!



Skating coaches can also use this program to help their skaters improve overall mental toughness.

You may be able to hit your skills and routines in practice, but when it comes to competitions your mental game plays a major role. When it's weak, you can't seem to hit simple skills, leaving you with a program that does not reach its full potential.

Most skaters spend approximately 99% of their practice time improving routines, skills, strength, and flexibility... leaving the last 1% to mental game, if that.

Mental toughness is all about mental preparation so you can perform your best. Mental toughness is about having confidence, focus, composure and trust in your skills when you step on the ice for practice or competition. Mental toughness is also about coping with setbacks, injury, and daily issues with your training.

How important is mental toughness to success in Figure skating? We think the mental game of any sport is essential to your success and we're glad you've made the commitment to improve your mental game!

How to Use The Confident Skater

We've included 8 lessons in this program. Each of the 8 lessons are broken down into the following 5 sections:

1. Session Objective—the main objective of the lesson.
2. What You Need to Know—an introduction and background about the topic.
3. Workbook Exercises—specific mental training exercises to complete.
4. Pre-Competition Mental Preparation Tips—tips to keep in mind prior to competition.
5. Post-Competition Mental Edge Assessment—a few questions to ask yourself about your mental game performance after you compete.

Here's what we suggest you do to get the most out of this program. You start by listening to each audio program in its entirety, then open the workbook and complete the workbook exercises for that session. If you are able to, you can follow along with the workbook as you listen to the audio program.

After you listen to the audio for session 1 and complete the workbook exercises for session 1, you should proceed to session 2 audio, and so on.

Finally, use the pre-competition mental preparation strategies as a review prior to practice and competition. And don't forget to answer the questions in the section titled: "Post-Competition Confidence Assessment" after each competition. This will help you fine-tune your mental game.

Session 1: Perform with Freedom

How to Overcome Pressure-Packed Expectations

Session One Objective

You'll learn how to overcome pressure-packed expectations that weaken your confidence in skating and replace them with small process goals, which will help you to focus on executing your skills.



What You Need to Know

Competitive skaters, who want to be the best they can, often set very high expectations. Your expectations are your standards for success or failure regarding your ability to perform. Strict expectations can weaken your confidence when you don't think you are performing to your standards.

We'd like to begin here with your mental training program. Strict expectations can also cause you to feel pressure. What are strict expectations? They are demands and judgments you have about your performance that can cause you to tense up or play it safe.

Expectations, such as "I need all level 4 spins" or "I can't make any mistakes", also cause you to focus too much on the outcomes, such as scores or winning a competition. Finally, expectations can trigger frustration when you think you are not performing well enough.

Let's start with some definitions... Understand that "self-confidence" and "expectations" have uniquely different meanings. Expectations are *needs or demands* that you have about how good your performance *should be*, such as "I MUST land my triple loop," or "An elite skater should not be tired at the

end of their long program.” These are standards you create about how you *think you SHOULD* perform, such as “I should hit a clean landing” or “I should have a good warm-up to do well in competition.”

When you have a lot of expectations, you judge each skill you complete in competition. For example, if you have an expectation that “I need to get 65 points in my long”, instead of focusing on your performance cues, you criticize every slight wobble during your routine. You see each wobble as a failure to achieve your 65.

In contrast, confidence is how strongly you believe that you can execute a task. When skaters have confidence, they know they can do the skills and focus on the cues to perform their skills.

Expectations Often Come From Four Areas

1. Demands you have about the result or outcome:
 - Example: I should get 1st overall at this competition.
2. Demands you have about the quality of your own performance:
 - Example: A junior skater shouldn't fall during their footwork sequence.
3. Demands you have about the quality of your mental game:
 - Example: I should always feel and act confident.
4. What you think others expect of you including your coaches, parents, and peers:
 - Example: My coach thinks I should win this competition.

Think of expectations as what you think you “should” and “shouldn't” do when you perform. Here are some common examples.

More Examples of a Skaters' Strict Expectations

- I should have perfect clean landings.
- I should get all level 4 spins in all of my routines.
- Every element should be without a deduction.
- I should compete better than I perform in practice.
- I shouldn't make any stupid mistakes.
- My performance should always feel good.
- I should hit my routines because my parents' expect me to hit them.
- I should beat my closest competitor.
- I should be mentally tough all of the time.
- I should never get frustrated.
- I should get level 4 on my footwork sequence.
- I should make the Olympics.

More examples will be provided to help you with listing any expectations you may have.

What's Self-confidence?

Confidence is the strength of your belief to perform or execute your skills and routines. For example, when you believe you can hit a perfect level 4 layback, you are more likely to achieve it. If you think you might fall on your haircutter, you'll enter this spin with hesitation. This will cause you to slow the spin down and loosen your position in anticipation for a fall.

What Are Process Goals?

Process goals are small objectives that will help you focus on executing your skills successfully. A process goal simply guides your focus to positive cues. For example, instead of having result-oriented goals, such as to win a competition,

a process goal is much smaller, such as “I will be aggressive and trust my skills today,” or “I will focus on keeping my leg straight on my camel.”

Your Mental Game Formula for Success

The plan is to perform without the pressure and judgment that is caused by high expectations, and instead perform with (1) high self-confidence, and (2) a focus on your process goals.

When you focus on the smaller things that help you execute your skills, you perform in the moment. For example, with a combo jump, you want to think about speed into the entry with a check after the turn, and landing ready for the next jump.

Three Steps in the Formula for Success

1. Uncover any expectations that you have and get rid of them. They create unnecessary pressure.
2. Harness the power of confidence, and learn how to have high confidence that's void of expectation (covered in Lesson 3).
3. Replace high expectations with process goals. Your goal is to focus on process goals, while letting go of the negative influence of expectations.

How to Uncover Your Expectations

Let's start by asking a few questions to help you uncover the top expectations that undermine your confidence and focus:

1. What expectations, such as “I should hit my double axel today” or “I should never wobble in my footwork” do you place on your own performance? And if you do NOT achieve these expectations, do you become upset, frustrated, or lose confidence in your own abilities? Do

you become frustrated when you don't reach your own expectations? Instead of focusing on the current skill, do you dwell on what you did wrong on the last skill?

2. What absolute demands do you maintain about your performances that cause you to feel pressure during practice or competition, such as, "I *MUST* have a clean short program"? Some skaters think that in order to get to the next level, they should be able to perform the entire routine without having a slight bobble or fall. But worrying about not making mistakes can set you up for failure. Although skaters want to be flawless during competition, you want to let go of mistakes quickly if they do happen.
3. What other demands do you place on your performance, and feel that you should achieve based on past experiences, such as, "I won last competition, I should win this competition as well"?
4. What names do you call yourself (also referred to as negative self-labels), such as "I am a loser," "I can never land a clean triple flip," "I always choke under pressure," or "I stink at spirals."
5. What past situations have caused you to have beliefs that may not be true? For instance, at the last competition you may have had a poor warm-up and you fell during your short program. This may lead you to the belief that if you don't have a good warm-up at your next competition that you will fall during your program.
6. What expectations do you feel from other people (coaches, teammates, or parents), such as "I have to win regionals, my parents think I will," or "My mom wants me to move up to the next level, so I have to hit my routines in competition," or "My coach thinks I should win this competition."

Workbook Exercise 1: What Are Your Expectations?

In the table on the next page, check off any of the expectations you have for practices and competition. List any expectations you have that are not provided in the table.



See table on the following page for a list of expectations.

Area	Expectations
Scoring, Outcomes, or Results	☐ I should get a 65 or higher in my long program. ☐ If I skate clean programs, I should win. ☐ I won this competition before; I should win again. ☐ All of my programs should be perfect. ☐ I should win the long. ☐ I should win on the technical half because it is my best half.
The Quality of My Performance	☐ I should feel strong and secure with my performance. ☐ I should perform perfectly. ☐ I should not make any careless mistakes. ☐ My performance should always <i>feel</i> good. ☐ All of my skills should <i>feel</i> solid. ☐ In order to get a high score, my programs should <i>feel</i> perfect.
My Mental Game	☐ I should never get upset or frustrated. ☐ I should have a good warm-up because that is the only way I can hit my programs. ☐ I should not be nervous before the competition. ☐ I should always feel confident.
From Others	☐ My parents expect me to hit my programs so I can win Nationals. ☐ My coach thinks I should win this coming competition. ☐ My parents expect me to qualify for higher competitions like nationals. ☐ My parents expect me to win because they pay a lot of money for skating. ☐ My friends, parents, or coaches think that I should make it to the Olympics.

How to Replace Expectations with Process Goals

Process goals will help you to stay focused on your performance, as well as your mental game. Below are examples of process goals for both areas:

- **Example Process Goals for Performance:** Chest up on my landings, be patient on entries to spins, and check after turns into jumps.
- **Example Process Goals for Your Mental Game:** Stay in the present, move on after any mistakes, and refocus when distracted.

Importance of Process Goals

- They help you to focus your mind on executing certain skills or areas of the competition successfully.
- They help you to focus on the here and now, and not on outcome. A skater can't control who is in the competition, the scores the officials provide, or the outcome of the competition.
- They help you to focus on what you want to do instead of what you don't want to do. Such as:
 - > **Want to do:** pull my chest up on my landing.
 - > **Don't want to do:** fall on my landing.
- Your process goals should be simple and based on your current performance.
- Mental process goals are focused on your emotions, focus, confidence, and how you want to think during the competition. Some example mental process goals are "be aggressive" or "keep my emotions in control" or "focus on one skill at a time."

Example Process Goals

Below are a few examples of performance and mental process goals to help you get started with generating some of your own. You can use ours listed here to work with your coach to make your own.

Jumps:

- Focus on tight air position/"snap"
- Think strong press into the jump
- Feel balanced landing
- Focus on a good position on takeoff or load and explode
- Feel a strong landing or pull jump out
- Focus on picking straight behind on the takeoff

Jump Combos:

- Feel a solid landing
- Focus on jumping smooth
- Strong from beginning to end
- Focus on speed into the entry
- Feel second jump, jumping higher
- Focus on tight air position

Footwork:

- Focus on strong edges
- Think: Gliding
- Focus on good posture
- Stay on my rhythm
- Focus on executing body movement
- Focus on facial expression

Spins:

- Feel an aggressive entry
- Focus on finding balance
- Focus on speed from beginning to end
- Feel leg extension throughout the spin
- Focus on being patient
- Focus on counting the revolutions

Spirals:

- Feel toe pointing
- Feel hip turn out
- Use body movement
- Focus on tight knee
- Focus on holding for the expected amount of time
- Feel flow throughout connecting steps

Choreography:

- Focus on facial and body expression
- Feel strong edges
- Focus on speed throughout choreography
- Focus on executing body movement
- Focus on gliding throughout the footwork
- Focus on keeping time with the music

Mental Process Goals:

- Be in the moment
- Trust in your ability
- Let go of mistakes quickly

- Focus on my strengths in skating
- Be aggressive
- Trust your skills

Workbook Exercise 2: Your Process Goals

Pick two or three process goals for each section that will help you to improve consistency and focus in the moment.



Write your answers in the table below.

Process Goals
Jumps 1. 2. 3.
Jump Combos 1. 2. 3.
Footwork 1. 2. 3.
Spins 1. 2. 3.

Spirals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Mental Process Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Summary

Your new *Formula for Success* is as follows: “I’ll perform without the mental handcuffs of expectations and instead focus on having (1) high self-confidence and staying in the moment by thinking about (2) simple process goals.”

Your first step is to become aware of expectations that hurt your performance and then learn to focus only on small objectives to help you complete your skills. Your confidence will thrive when you do this.

Keep in mind that your process goals may change each day depending on where you are in your season. At the beginning of the season you may be nervous for your first competition and so the process goals may be “breathe and find your rhythm.” But as the season continues and you are more relaxed with your skills the process goals may be “attack with confidence.”

You have taken the first step by identifying the expectations that ultimately undermine your confidence and limit your performance. This step alone will make a big difference in your mental game—especially if it enables you to stop focusing on outcome expectations.

Pre-competition Mental Preparation

Please remind yourself of the mental strategies you are working on this week, and begin to implement these skills in practice and in competition.



1. Identify any expectations you demand of your own performance. Do your best to “park” your expectations (leave them out in the parking lot), and instead focus on your process goals.
 - a. Make a list of any expectations that you have.
 - b. Take the list and put an X over the expectations.
2. Before each practice, set two process goals for your performance, such as “Strong and tight” and “Go big.” They can be the same process goals all week.
 - a. Performance process goal 1:

 - b. Performance process goal 2:

3. Before each practice, set two mental process goals to help you improve simple areas of your mental game, such as “let go of mistakes” and “stay aggressive from beginning to end” or “stay positive” and “perform with intensity.”
 - a. Mental process goal 1:

 - b. Mental process goal 2:

4. Before the competition, be aware of any expectations you may have and write them down. Write a big X over the expectations.
5. Before the competition, set two process goals for your performance.

a. Performance process goal 1:

b. Performance process goal 2:

6. Before the competition, set two mental process goals to help you improve simple areas of your mental game.

a. Mental process goal 1:

b. Mental process goal 2:

Post-Competition Confidence Assessment

After your next practice or competition, please answer a few questions about your mental game. It will be best if you answer them on the same day as your practice or competition.

1. What are two things you did well today, in regards to your mental game and performance?
2. What are two things you would like to improve for the next practice or competition?
3. What expectations, if any, did you notice when going into today's practice or competition?
4. What process goals did you use for today's practice or competition?
5. How well did you let go of your expectations and instead, focus on your process goals?
6. What did you learn today about replacing your expectations with process goals that will help you in the future?

Want To Improve Your Performance On The Ice?

“The Confident Figure Skater” is a complete brain dump of the TOP eight mental training sessions we teach our figure skaters to help them boost their mental game and improve consistency – from how to mentally prepare for competition to performing under pressure to building unstoppable confidence.



8 Lessons On 2 CDs With Workbook:

- **Session 1:** Perform with freedom: How to overcome pressure-packed expectations
- **Session 2:** Get into the zone: How to stay focused
- **Session 3:** Dominate with confidence: How to be confident on the inside
- **Session 4:** Trust your game: How to become a fearless competitor
- **Session 5:** Perform with composure: How to stay poised after mistakes
- **Session 6:** Make your mind an asset: How to be dynamic instead of perfect
- **Session 7:** Compete without fear: How to conquer fear of failure
- **Session 8:** Get focused for competition: How to unleash your competitive edge

“The Confident Figure Skater” CD and Workbook Program Includes:

- 2 CDs including 8 confidence-boosting lessons on audio. Each 15-20 minute session includes one mental training lesson to help you improve confidence, focus, composure, and develop focused routines.
- One workbook to guide you through my mental toughness sessions and to overcome mental game roadblocks.

Order [The Confident Figure Skater](http://www.peaksports.com/the-confident-figure-skater/) today to boost your mental game and improve your performance on the ice!

Use the link below to read more about and purchase The Confident Figure Skater:
<http://www.peaksports.com/the-confident-figure-skater/>