



# Mental Skills for an Athlete – Role of the Coach

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# Content

What are mental skills?

Why do we need to work on mental skills?

Discussion in small groups

Role of the coach in mental skills learning

How can a coach assist in mental skills learning?

Questions and Answers





# What are mental skills?

Tools for the mind and part of life skills

In the context of sport:

- Goal-setting
- Mental imagery
- Self-talk
- Energy management
- Concentration
- Self-confidence
- Mental preparation
- Excelling under pressure
- ...

General idea – learning to regulate thoughts, feelings and actions





# Why do we need to work on mental skills?

- Important for overall well-being
- Important for psychological and physical safety
- Competitive edge
  - Improve the quality of trainings
    - Only so much time in our disposal!
    - Being at practice and being present at practice!
- Action counts, but does not outweigh feelings and thoughts







**How do you apply mental skills in  
your daily coaching?**



# Role of the coach in mental skills learning



- Coaching is a holistic process
- "Coaching is unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn, rather than teaching them."

-John Whitmore

- Coaches do not need to know everything about everything
- Being interested in what is going on in an athlete's mind
- Principle – never try things in competition that have not been practiced in training!





# How can a coach assist in mental skills learning?

- Coach does not need to know how to do everything
- Awareness of various areas is important
- Work with a team – two heads is better than one head in problem solving
- Utilize the expertise of other specialists – know your strengths and limitations
- Be interested and passionate about issues related to the athlete's well-being and performance
- Ask questions – try to find out what is going on in the athlete's mind
- Remember that you're working with people – you're in the people business
- Life-sport balance is extremely important for high level results





# Mental skills training to practice

- Plan mental skills training
- Measure mental skills development
- Utilize available resources
- Remember good life-sport balance – underrecovery trap!
- Take interest in the athlete as a person
- Remember positive reinforcement
- Practice and repetition over constant change and development
- Be creative and ready to be uncomfortable
- Risks and rewards
- There are many routes to the top





Thank you!

Questions & Answers





# Pohjoisen tähdet

Kun on hetki ennen, kun sydän pakahtuu, kun taka-askelia ei enää voi ottaa. Kun mennään ääri rajoille, kun kuljetaan edellä, kun vedetään isosti. Kun ollaan yhtä, kun annetaan kaikkemme, kun uskalletaan.  
Siinä olemme me, Pohjoisen tähdet.

