Sports Psychiatry & Psychology: Helping Athletes Reach Their Potential

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No Disclosures Except For Small Royalties From Book
Sports Psychiatrist & Clinical Professor of Psychiatry

*Baltimore Orioles: team psychiatrist & mental preparation trainer (1996-present)
*Sports Psychiatrist (office practice-1997-present)
*NFL Sports Psychiatry Consultant (2013-present)

*Baltimore Ravens: team psychiatrist (1996-2013-retired)

*University of Maryland School of Medicine Faculty: resident/fellow teaching and addiction research (treatment effectiveness & SBIRT-screening, brief interventions, and referral to treatment for tobacco, alcohol, drugs & Rx meds)

*US Army Medical Corps Colonel (ret-2002): 28 years service; Persian Gulf War Veteran
Learning Objectives

- Identify common emotional & behavioral barriers to injury recovery
- Recite the traits of high achieving athletes
- Utilize several models of peak performance to counter the negative effects of pressure
- Identify common clinical barriers to peak performance
Sports Psychiatry: Four Stages of Injury Recovery

• Acute Injury
• Rehabilitation
• Return to Play
• Departure from Sports
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Acute Injury</th>
<th>Rehab &amp; Recovery</th>
<th>Return to Play</th>
<th>Departure From the Sport</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactive Emotions</strong></td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Fear</td>
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<td>Fear</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Guarding</td>
<td>Anxiety/Fear</td>
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<td>Disappointment</td>
<td>Doubt</td>
<td>Intensity</td>
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<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Anxiety/Fear</td>
<td>Doubt</td>
<td>Loss/Grief</td>
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<td>Doubt</td>
<td>Tension</td>
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<td><strong>Contemplative Emotions</strong></td>
<td>Annoyance</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Fear (Re-injury)</td>
<td>Resentment</td>
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<td>Apprehension</td>
<td>Pessimism</td>
<td>Fear (Injuring Others)</td>
<td>Remorse</td>
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<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>Tentativeness</td>
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<td>Embarrassment</td>
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<td>Shame</td>
<td>Distrust</td>
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<td>Pressure</td>
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<td>Concern</td>
<td>Apathy</td>
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<td><strong>Critical Issues</strong></td>
<td>Pain Control</td>
<td>Persistent Pain</td>
<td>Range of Motion</td>
<td>Chronic Pain</td>
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<td>Sleep</td>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>Speed/Quickness</td>
<td>Loss of Function</td>
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<td>Energy</td>
<td>Social Isolation</td>
<td>Endurance</td>
<td>Financial Strain</td>
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<td>Information</td>
<td>Complications</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Lifestyle Change</td>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>&amp; Focus</td>
<td>Change</td>
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<td>Substance Use</td>
<td>Soreness</td>
<td>Career &amp; Identity</td>
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<td>Substance Use</td>
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</table>
- Support network
- Perspective shift (get better in some area)
- Brief motivational therapy
- Sleep hygiene & meds
- Pain management
- Anxiety/mood meds
- Stretching program
- Mental preparation

Sports Psychiatry: Injury Treatment Strategies
Why do teams, athletes & other performers need sports psychiatrists & psychologists?

“Ninety percent of the game is half mental”

Jim Wohlford
Mental Aspects of the Game

“Performance = Potential – Negative Effects of Pressure”

Tom Hanson, Ph.D
Mental Health Well Being Continuum

- Clinical Psychologist & Psychiatrist
- Sports Psychologist

Sports Psychiatrist

Normal
occasional symptoms

Sub-Syndromal Illness
frequent symptoms

Active Mental Illness

Good Mental Health
asymptomatic

Peak Performance
flow or zone states

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Believe It!
- **B**alances Sports & other Life Areas
- **E**ncourages & Supports Teammates
- **L**ets Go of Mistakes/Defeats Easily
- **I**mage about Self & Abilities is Positive
- **E**njoys Training & Competition
- **V**isualizes Success
- **E**valuates Performance & Outcome
- **I**ntensity (Maintains Focus & Aggression)
- **T**alk (Uses Positive Affirmations)

Traits of High Achieving Athletes
Emotional Control (manage feelings & impulses despite competitive pressure)
Self-awareness (maintain perspective between ideal & actual play)
Internal motivation (passion for practice, play, and getting better)
Empathy (compassion and support of others)
Socialization (effective communication and bonding)

Rick Aberman 2011; www.lennickaberman.com
Burnout vs Happiness

PERMA (M Seligman)
- P (positive emotions)
- E (engagement)
- R (relationships)
- M (meaning)
- A (accomplishments)

www.authentichappiness.com
How Does Pressure Affect Athletic Performance?

- Over-thinking/indecision
- Dwelling on mistakes
- Inattention/distractibility
- Impulsivity
- Emotional reactivity
- Arousal & anxiety
- Anorexia & insomnia
- Muscle chain tightness
- Reduced visual acuity
- Injury/pain
- Poor communication
- Low motivation
- Team conflict
Focused For Basketball

Five Steps to Complete Performance

Step 1: Lifestyle

Step 2: Physical

Step 3: Technical

Step 4: Mental

Step 5: Emotional

- Flow
- Rhythm
- Intensity
- Style of Play
- System
Confidence Pyramid

- Competitive Self-Confidence
- Emotional Control/Intensity Regulation
- Pre-Competition Routine
- Goal Setting and Self Evaluation
  - Breathing & Relaxation
  - Positive Focus & Relaxation
  - Self-Talk & Attention
  - Visualization & Imagery
  - Motivation & Persistence

- Talent and Experience
- Fitness, Nutrition and Injury Prevention
- Life Balance and Stress Control
Mental Preparation Training: Imagery/Visualization

• “If the scene that you are perceiving has a high level of personal meaning for you, then you will tend to imprint it more intensively & later you will be able to recall it more clearly and completely”

• **Example:** low confidence in a high school tennis Player
Performance = Potential - the negative effects of pressure
“The mental message will dictate the physical action and help determine its quality”

**Example:** introducing positive self-talk in a high school distance runner whose performance had consistently been below her potential

**Mental Preparation:** Affirmations & Positive Self Talk
“The typical athlete goes all-out during competition. That’s easy. The exceptional athlete goes all-out to prepare for competition. That’s difficult.

Examples: developing a pre-collision routine in a high school lacrosse player & a pre-practice & shot routine in a college basketball player.
Performance Barriers Across the Lifespan

- Youth (ages 9-14)
- High School (14-18)
- College (18-25)
- Professional (21-40)
- Adult (25-60+)
Sports Psychiatry: Youth Sports Trends

- Early shift to highest competitive level
- One-sport specialization
- Year round training
- Win at all cost mentality
- Parent-coach-child conflicts
- Social isolation/burnout
- Immaturity/entitlement
- Disordered eating
- Aggression
- Early sexual activity
- Internalized sense of failure
- Perfectionism
- Damage to self-esteem & confidence
- Injury (repetitive motion, concussion)

Sports Psychiatry: Youth Sports Concerns
• My son can’t sleep & worries about his competition too much (10 yo swimmer)
• My daughter gets short of breath & has to come out of the game (11 yo basketball)
• My daughter is afraid to do backover or blink skills and freezes (12 yo gymnast)
• She is too good a skater to quit (16 yo)
• My sons becoming isolated & his grades are dropping (15 yo soccer player)
• I don’t even like tennis anymore (18 yo)
• She stopped eating to get her times down (17 yo runner)
- Early commitment/departure
- Academic underachievement
- Self confidence & self esteem
- Weight & joint health
- Serious Injury (face, knee, fractures)
- Chronic injuries & pain
- Alcohol & stimulants

Sports Psychiatry: College Sports Concerns
- I'm afraid to pitch (21 yo relief pitcher)
- I hate this school, my coach & teammates but I'm stuck (18 yo lacrosse player)
- I miss too many classes to care about grades (20 yo softball player)
- He gets drunk & abusive (22 yo football)
Partner Violence/Divorce
Career planning/bankruptcy
Suicide & contagion effect
Serious Injury (fractures, brain trauma)
Chronic pain & addiction
Sleep, Stress, Mood
Alcohol, stimulants, cannabis & pain killers
- I can’t sleep because of this burning pain (23/football)
- My divorce was hard, then I missed my kids (35/baseball)
- I’m not ready to leave tennis—it’s been my whole life (32 yo)
- I hurt everywhere & now I’m addicted to pain killers & soma (35 yo retired football)
Sports Psychiatry: Master Athletes Concerns

- Overuse Injuries
- Transition out of competition and/or sports
- Serious Injury & Return to Competition Fear
- Performance Slumps
- Balancing Sport, Work & Family
• I can’t control my emotions anymore (55/equestrian)
• I’ve been an athlete my whole life (42/injured runner)
• I’ve got talent, but I choke (58/billiards)
• I get so frustrated, I should quit (55/golfer)

Sports Psychiatry: Masters Case Studies
Figure 2: Stress Recognition and Control

- **Stressors**
  - Practice & Competition
  - Injury & Rehabilitation
  - Playing Time
  - Contract/Scholarships
  - Family/Friends
  - Housing/Money
  - Legal

- **Stress Reactions**
  - Sleep & Energy
  - Substance Use
  - Change in Activity
  - Depression/Isolation
  - Anxiety/Fear
  - Anger/Frustration
  - Somatic (organ systems)

- **Support Network**

- **Mental Disorder**
- **Past Stress Reactions**
- **Family Background & Culture**

- **Loss**
- **Education**
- **Personality Style**
- **Trauma**
Know the facts
Recognize symptoms early
**Trigger relaxation**
Raise energy
Think positively/look calm
Develop support
Take regular breaks
Improve time management
Stay informed/ignore rumors