

Strong Self Regulation – The Secret of Champions!



Preamble

The following psychological resource for participants and athletes, has been developed by sport psychologist Fiona McCarthy on behalf of the NSW Office of Sport, as a key initiative of the NSW Government's Future Champions strategy.

For more information on Future Champions, please visit www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development

Getting to know the author

Fiona McCarthy is a registered psychologist, specialising in sport psychology and is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and the Australian College of Sport and Exercise Psychologists. Fiona owns and operates Mind and Body Balance, a business she established 25 years ago.

Fiona is the Hunter Academy of Sport, Sport Psychology Consultant and a New South Wales Institute of Sport, Sport Psychology Service Provider. Over the last twenty-

five years, Fiona has assisted many teams, athletes, parents and coaches in the areas of confidence, concentration, handling pressure, motivation, goal setting, time management, performance preparation and general well-being. Fiona has worked with numerous sports, assisting recreational level athletes to professional, international, Olympic and Paralympic level athletes, reach their full potential.



Background to these resources

The importance of having a mental 'tool kit' to support your learning, performance and engagement on and off the sporting field.

The following resources have been developed by Fiona McCarthy to assist athletes at all levels, in understanding the importance of having a suite of mental 'tools' at their disposal. These 'tools' are practical and multidimensional and will help athletes learn and develop the necessary mental skills they require to help them navigate their way through their sporting journey with a positive mindset and achieve success on and off the field.

It is well recognised that to reach the pinnacle within sport, an athlete needs a superior mindset consisting of strong and effective mental skills and strategies.

Importantly, mental skills are very intertwined and integrated, so it is recommended that you read about and put into regular practice, a number of these resources to strengthen the 'mental tools' in your kit bag!



Self Regulation

Self regulation is a complement of practical skills and strategies that you can learn and practice that not only allow you to get the best out of your learning and development within your sport, but also will assist your self management and performance in and out of sport such as in school, university or your job!

The dimensions of self regulation

Effort	Is how motivated you are to achieve your goals. How willing are you to do extra things that will improve your performance?
Planning	Is your understanding of what is required to complete a task before you begin the task. How prepared are you?
Self Efficacy	Is your belief in your ability to be successful. The stronger this belief is, the more motivated you will be to achieve your goals. How strongly do you believe that you will achieve your goals?
Self Monitoring	Is about your awareness of how you are going with a task while you are completing it. Do you know how well you are executing your skills in training?
Evaluation	Occurs after you complete a task. It involves your assessment of what went well and what can be improved.
Self Reflection	Involves thinking about what you have learnt and using this knowledge to improve your performance next time. It should occur before, during and after a training session or a competitive event. Do you have a good understanding of your strengths and weaknesses?



In fact, self-regulation has been shown to be a key factor underpinning sporting success at the highest levels and a key part of the psychological toolkit

of our finest Australian athletes (Australian Institute of Sport).

A recent study in which multiple Australian Olympic and Paralympic

champions were interviewed (Burns et al., 2018 ¹), revealed that self-regulation was integral to their competitive preparation and performance success.

These strong self-regulators:

- Always **planned** ahead and had a **strategy** and were highly **self-organised**
- Utilised mental **imagery** (e.g., visualised themselves in their mind doing their performance) to practice and hone their skills and prepare for the pressure of competition
- Were highly **self aware** in the 'moment' and would constantly **monitor** themselves
- **Evaluated** how they went after training and competition
- Continually **reflected** on what they had learnt
- And were **solution focussed** – experimenting with potential solutions if they had a gap in an aspect of their preparation or performance, so that they would be better prepared and would perform better the next time around!

As an emerging athlete, there are many things that you are juggling in and out of sport. You have to train hard, travel, manage and juggle your sport commitments with your education or work,

family, manage injuries or illness and perform under pressure within competition.

Juggling and managing all of this can be very challenging indeed.

Practicing and utilising your self-regulation skills can also help you cope with all these demands and improve your performance in and out of your sport!



What's next?

Enhancing your self regulatory skills

To make sure you use these skills habitually, YOU will need to PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE YOUR SELF REGULATORY SKILLS—like our finest Australian athletes do!

For example:

Setting and sticking to **S.M.A.R.T.E.R goals** can increase the amount of effort you put into your training and help you plan for games, competitions and other events. (Make sure to check out our Goal Setting - Foundations for Success resource for tips)

Mental Imagery can assist your skills and performance and help increase your **self-belief** and **confidence**. (Make sure to check out our Goal Setting - Foundations for Success resource for tips)

Concentration strategies and **positive self-talk** can improve your ability to Self-monitor your performance during training. (Make sure to check out our Goal Setting - Foundations for Success resource for tips)

Keeping a **self-reflection journal** will help you increase the amount of **evaluation** and **reflection** and **problem-solving** that you do. (Make sure to check out our Goal Setting - Foundations for Success resource for tips)

¹ Burns L, Weissensteiner JR, Cohen M. Lifestyles and mindsets of Olympic, Paralympic and world champions: is an integrated approach the key to elite performance? Br J Sports Med 2018;bjsports-2018-099217.

Self Reflection Loop

(Adapted from Gibbs Reflective Cycle)



We hope you liked our tips

Have FUN building your psychological skills and strategies and put them into practice in and out of sport!

Remember importantly, if you are unsure of any of these tips or require further advice, please talk to your Coach, Parent or consult a Sport Psychologist.

You might like to check out our NEW animated YouTube video, Developing your mental 'tool kit' to support you in and out of sport featured within the NSW Office of Sport's Pathways and Development webpages @ <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development>.

Check out more tips for Participants @ <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/social-and-recreational-sport-participants>

And our tips for Emerging and High-Performance Athletes @ <https://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/pathways-and-development/emerging-athletes>



**Future Champions -
Developing your
mental 'tool kit' to
support you in and out
of sport.**

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