

## **OVERCOMING NERVES – GETTING YOUR ATHLETES TO THINK LIKE WINNERS**

We that are involved in inspiring others and getting the best from them whatever their ability are bound to encounter those that are unable to get the best from themselves because they are unconfident or become nervous at events. How can we help turn this situation round and get our athletes to “think like winners”?

What needs to happen is to help change what is a “static mentality”, so one that concentrates on the here and now and may highlight the negatives to one of a “growing mentality” where the athlete begins to believe in what they are capable of doing and are able to see the way to do it without worrying about the end result which will trigger nervousness, so what can we do to make this change happen? Changing the way that we get our athletes to approach training and competition is the key to this.

### **Racing - Focus on the process**

Help your athletes to focus on the here and now and the process that they are about to undertake, not thinking about what is going to happen. Remind them of the training that has been done and focus on those positives. In training for their event get them to work on “getting into the zone” where they concentrate on how they perform and not what they are trying to achieve. This way nerves can be settled by taking things one step and a time without worrying about the result of the process.

### **Create a protective positive mind-set**

If an athlete has had bad experiences either in training or in competition, get them to reflect back and find the positives in the situation. Encourage them to focus on the good memories from the event, for example if a runner “blew up” at 6 miles in their last two races, ask them to reflect and concentrate on the good miles where they were feeling good – this connects in with the above where the process is thought about rather than the end result.

### **Use nerves as a trigger to overcome nerves.**

This may seem a bizarre way of thinking however excessive nerves can be debilitating and they need to be overcome. Excitement and heightened anticipation is a good thing before an event however when this spills over to a nervous state it can become a negative experience. Athletes must be taught to recognise and overcome the difference between the good state and the nervous state. If an athlete is troubled by excessive nerves they need to concentrate on recognising the symptoms, perhaps shallower breathing or sweating excessively. When this happens they must use this as a trigger to take themselves back to the stages above – concentrating on the “here and now” and looking at “process rather than outcome”

### **Change the way you/they speak about things**

For some just thinking about a situation will bring on a nervous state. By changing the way that both coach and athlete talk about an event this can be alleviated. Following the pointers above speak about HOW they will compete not about how the event will end or what the outcome will be, again concentrate on the process and not the outcome. Keep in the moment.

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