

ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE You Can Reach Your Personal Best

Olympic athletes use self-hypnosis to help them achieve top performance. The United States teams and those of other nations recognize that the power of mental rehearsal is equally as important as physical practice. Russian teams are taught mental conditioning from the onset of training.

For the average person, hypnotherapy cannot turn a golfing duffer into an international champion. Factors, skills and abilities other than mental, are involved. But hypnosis can be used to enable a player to achieve his or her personal best.

Time Magazine reported, in a cover story on the 1984 Olympics, that on the night before the finals in women's gymnastics, Mary Lou Retton, then age 16, lay in bed at Olympic Village mentally rehearsing her performance ritual. She had done the same on hundreds of previous nights, visualizing herself performing all her routines perfectly. Imagining in her mind all the moves, and rehearsing them again and again. The result, was a performance of perfection, presented with charm, poise and confidence, culminating in a gold.

"What the mind can conceive, the body can achieve!" Proof of that statement has been provided countless times. Mary Lou pictured a perfect performance in her mind. Her body produced it. The same capability is available to any sports enthusiast. If the skills and coordination abilities do not equal Olympic levels, they can carry the player to the heights of personal best, providing new levels of achievement and satisfaction.

To train the body to the limits of its capabilities without simultaneously training the mind, is to invite, at best, mediocrity. Sports psychologists have claimed that for Olympic teams, 80 percent of an athlete's performance is in the mind. Such belief has been echoed by championship players in virtually every form of competition.

What The Mind Can Do

Mental rehearsal, also termed visualization, can create and reaffirm the confidence necessary to achieve top performance. A picture visualized in the mind can convince the subconscious that achievement is possible. The automatic nervous system performs in exactly the same manner as during physical rehearsal. Neuromuscular coordination improves. What your mind can conceive, you can achieve. If you can think it and see it in your mind, you can do it!

What can be accomplished through the powers of the mind? Perhaps most important is the development of positive attitudes. Negative thoughts pertaining to performance skills can be changed or eliminated. Enjoyment of the sport will be enhanced to a major degree as skills improve to the point where intermittent incidents of poor performance no longer arouse irritation, anger, discouragement or detrimental emotional reaction. Concentration, coordination, technique, all can improve as well as awareness of proper form and posture.

Sports enthusiasts face the same stumbling blocks that people have to deal with in other areas of life - business, personal relationships, achievement of goals and ambitions. The biggest of all is fear, and fear comes in many forms. Fear of failure is always restrictive and is very common in

sports, as is its hidden partner, fear of success - an apprehension that success can create the expectation (among others) of further improvement. Fear of humiliation can be strong. Many golfers experience near terror on the first tee where people may be watching the first drives. Competition can produce sensations of intimidation, resulting in deterioration of skills.

Hypnotherapy, or properly learned and applied self-hypnosis, can work to reduce or eliminate the mental obstacles to peak performance in sports activities. This is an area in which the truth of the phrase "what the mind can conceive, the body can achieve" becomes highly evident.

The Steps To Achievement

The goal of hypnosis in its applications is not the learning or acquisition of the basic skills involved, though these could be helped through hypnosis as used in enhancing learning skills. The goal is to enable the athlete to achieve the best personal level, performing at peak. As with virtually all hypnosis, the first step must be relaxation. Relaxation to a level appropriate for the implanting of hypnotic suggestion is not really resting. It is deep, and can be brought about through a hypnotherapist. Or it can be learned from a teaching hypnotherapist or even through study and practice using any of several excellent books on the subject.

Goal setting is essential. Without having an objective, it is pointless to begin a task, project or trip. Goals may be set by athletes, coaches or therapists or a combination thereof. It is important for goals to be specific, focused on the area in which improvement is desired. Playing better tennis is not a valid goal. Improving a serve or

backhand is a goal. Goals must be short-term, achievable and step by step, so that both success and completion are experienced.

Concentration is vitally important, and sometimes difficult to develop. Hypnotherapy has long been an effective means of improving concentration capabilities. Distractions must be eliminated. Post-hypnotic cues may prove useful in stimulating both concentration and specific skills. Visualization, not just in mental rehearsing, but at the moment of performance can produce dramatic results.

Finally, mental rehearsal is the ultimate key to superlative performance. It can prove more productive than physical practice. Imagery is not merely visual in nature; it can include all the senses. In a diving competition, the form of the dive is visual; the smell of the chlorine water is olfactory; the wetness of the entry is sensory; the cheers of the crowd are auditory. Perfection requires the use of all senses.



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This brochure is presented for the information of the general public, to discuss the applications of hypnosis available for dealing with such matters as habit control, stress, excessive eating, smoking, fears, motivation, self-confidence, concentration, learning enhancement, attitude modification, pain management, insomnia, goal-setting, relationships and other areas which lead to unhappiness, dysfunction or difficulty in achieving personal goals.

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