



by Alan Richardson

MENTAL SKILLS FOR REFEREES, MENTORS, AND INSTRUCTORS

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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Basketball will always be an emotional experience for all participants, either positive or negative.

Officials, who cannot control their emotions, will find themselves fighting inner battles.

How do they handle emotion with intelligence? How can they enhance and energise performance rather than allow disruption?

Self-control, then, requires the intelligence to manage yourself and those around you in emotionally changed situations.

Self-control is the "ability to perform well under a variety of stress-producing circumstances".

CHECKLIST FOR OBSERVERS OF OFFICIALS (EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE)

Responses are:

Always / Never / Sometimes

- ▼ Prepares mentally for games.
- ▼ Able to handle the big game.
- ▼ Maintains self belief with positive self talk.
- ▼ Persists in the face of frustration.
- ▼ Adapts easily to any situation.
- ▼ Copes calmly with stress.
- ▼ Can be relied upon in critical moments.
- ▼ Deals with other people in a mature, positive manner.
- ▼ Accepts accountability for actions - never seeks excuses.
- ▼ Can be trusted regardless of circumstances.

A 12 STEP STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING SELF-CONTROL

Like confidence, self-control is a quality that officials must possess. Even if they

cannot control what is happening in the environment, they can choose how they will react.

Self-control is based upon the the relationship between thoughts and emotions. We know that our state of mind influences our emotions. Which in turn, energises our performance. So in order to improve performance by controlling emotions we need to change our thinking.

1. Awareness - analyse when loss of control occurred in the past. Why, when and where did it happen? Identify your personal weaknesses.
2. Understanding - realise why your thinking changed and how it caused an emotional imbalance.
3. Differences - remember examples of when you kept control and lost control in similar circumstances. What were the differences in your attitude, emotions and behaviour?
4. Problem - try to find the problem. (e.g.). Is it a sense of failure?
5. Belief - raise the expectation you have of yourself, include self-control as one of your virtues.
6. Reinforcement - behaviour change is accelerated by reinforcement, so reward good behaviours.
7. Goals - always set yourself a series of achievable small goals that will effect change.
8. Techniques - build a series of behavioural techniques for maintaining calm and self-control (how you will react to pressure.)
9. Planning - achieve your goals by following a planned programme.
10. Progress - improvement comes in a series of ups and downs, so be patient.
11. Setbacks - accept that setbacks will occur from time to time, be tolerant and become even stronger mentally.

12. Remember - review and recall what you are doing in order to grow and improve.

TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE SELF-CONTROL

Pre-game preparation

Most situations can be anticipated and discussed before the game. Strategies for dealing with such situations can be agreed at this time. Mental preparation enables officials to be ready for any eventuality.

Experienced instructors can help officials understand the link between thoughts, feelings and actions. Video analysis can help this process.

Be relaxed

The ideal performance state for officials is that of "relaxed readiness", possessing energy without tension. This state allows the officials to stay calm, loose and responsive to the emotional pressures of the game.

Relaxation techniques can help officials control their thinking, so they can trigger emotions that remove unnecessary tensions and conserve energy.

Anxiety is often described as "information that will not go away". Relaxation clears the mind and enables the officials to deal with it and move towards relaxed readiness.

Relaxation techniques include:

- ▼ Stretching.
- ▼ Breathing control.
- ▼ Arousal management (music, video).
- ▼ Massage.
- ▼ Visualisation.

Officials wishing to develop relaxation skills should organise a quiet place with a comfortable seat. They should try to select something to focus on, allow a passive attitude to develop and seek to enjoy a state of nothingness. The officials should be able to

use these techniques in moments of stress.

Develop Performance Routines (Rituals)

Behavioural routines that help control our thinking will ultimately lead to better self-control.

When preparing for the game, all officials are subjected to positive and negative thinking, but attitude is a choice. The mentally strong official will only allow positive thoughts to predominate. That is why an active behavioural routine before every game keeps officials busy, comfortable and focused on positive thoughts.

Pre-game routines can even be produced in written form in much the same way as a pre-game mechanics board.

Pre-Game Routine Card (Self Talk)

- ▼ Be confident.
- ▼ Know my job.
- ▼ Breathe deeply, stay cool.
- ▼ Do simple things well.
- ▼ Feel good, look confident.
- ▼ Deal with adversity.
- ▼ Relax and enjoy myself.
- ▼ Stay strong, however long the game lasts.
- ▼ Seize the moment and have no regrets.

Positive Self Talk

Officials should discipline themselves to allow only positive self-talk.

Physical Reminders

Behaviour/actions that trigger positive self talk.

Modelling

When officials are having problems with self-identity, a way to create a positive attitude is to model an official he/she admires.

Visualisation

A process in which the official visualises the desired performance and banishes all negative thoughts.

SUMMARY

If anxiety is information that will not go away, then the greatest danger to officials self-control are the internal or external distractions that can destroy concentration and trigger negative thoughts. Officiating is the process of reading and reacting, with officials reading the ever changing flow of the game., choosing and executing the correct responses. Successful officials excel at both reading the game and knowing how to ignore distractions from both participants and spectators.



