

Psychological Skills for Goaltenders

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Arousal

Arousal Control

Arousal is physiological and psychological activation. Too much? Performance suffers with anxiety and jitters. Too little? Performance suffers with apathy and disinterest. The key is to know your optimal zone of arousal, and be able to get there consistently. Pre-game anxiety is common and often has to be lowered for optimal performance. Preparation, self-talk, cognitive re-appraisal, focused breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. Focus on striving to compete, not concerning over an outcome.



Self-Talk

The intent is to move yourself from heavy conscious control to a state of automaticity (flow state, or in the zone). Self-talk can be Power Statements or ABC's. Focus self-talk on achievement rather than ability. Use it to control your inner-dialogue before, during, or after games or practices. Always frame your self-talk in the positive to strive for, rather than as something to avoid.



Imagery

The process of re-creating an experience in your mind. Imagine a positive performance in a difficult setting. Imagine various saves- a suggestion would be saves that are a function of good positioning and tracking, like a simple chest save. Pre-game and pre-practice imagery will serve to build self-efficacy (the belief in your ability to accomplish a particular task with your current skill set), as well as build confidence.



Concentration

Your concentration can be wide (observing patterns and player movement) or narrow (locking gaze on a shot release). You can direct it inward for self-talk or ruminating on a goal, or outward to process the play. Your focus is usually strong, it's more a matter of where it's directed.




*The following graphic is a representation of my current knowledge & understanding in this domain and is subject to change.

These 4 psychological skills make up a basic list, not exhaustive, of important skills for goaltenders to consider strengthening. These skills are summarized from an article titled "Psychological Skills for Successful Ice Hockey Goaltenders", written by Ryan Gelinas and Krista Munroe-Chandler (2006).