



POSITIVE COACHING

PERFORMANCE SERIES

Strengthen Self: THE MENTAL GAME

Date: May 13, 2026

Trainer: Kip Rodgers

Our Mission

To change the culture of youth sports so that every child, regardless of social or economic circumstance, has access to a positive youth sports experience.

PCA Partners & Ambassadors

➔ Plus, over 60 professional sports teams and over 60 current and former pro athletes and coaches!



LEARNING PRINCIPLES

1. We are smarter **together** than apart
2. We learn by **experiencing** and **doing**
3. We learn by **listening** and **sharing**

LEARNING AGREEMENTS

1. Try on **the process**
2. Take care of **yourself** and **others**
3. Make **space**/take **space**

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- 1** Identify key strategies to help athletes **FOCUS** and stay “locked in”
- 2** Teach effective **RESET** techniques for athletes can move on after setbacks
- 3** Build emotional **REGULATION** skills to for athletes to stay calm and compete under pressure

DISCUSSION | One Word

1. What's ONE word that defines you as a coach?
2. What's ONE word that describes your mindset during competition?
3. What do you do to help you athletes focus when things get tough?



YOUR MIND IS TRAINABLE

STRENGTHEN SELF



Breathwork



**Nervous System
Regulation**



**Power of
Routines**

YOUR MIND IS TRAINABLE

Breathwork



REFLECTION | Stress

Think of a recent time when you felt stress.

How did your body respond?

Name some situations that would it be helpful for your athletes to have a “Calm Down” switch?



“CALM DOWN SWITCH”



- Sends a message to your body that says, “Hey, it’s okay– you’re safe.”
- Slows your heartbeat, relaxes muscles, helps you think clearly
- Helps you move from PANIC to POWER



ANDREW HUBERMAN, Ph.D. / Stanford University Professor of neurobiology, podcast host ***Huberman Lab***

YOUR MIND IS TRAINABLE

Nervous System Regulation





“

Stress is information, not weakness. ”

Modupe Akinola

Professor Columbia University
Expert on Stress and Performance

DISCUSSION | Stress as Information

What kinds of stressors show up for you in your sport?

How have you seen these stressors impact your athletes?



ACTIVITY | “Know Your Zone”



RED = Overwhelmed, Angry, Fearful

YELLOW = Tense, Distracted, Frustrated

GREEN = Focused, Ready, Calm Energy



ACTIVITY | “Know Your Zone”



HOW IT FEELS	BODY CUES	SPORTS CUES

ACTIVITY | “Know Your Zone”

Identify which Zone each situation would be for you:

- You miss an easy shot early in the game.
- Your team is down by 1 with 30 seconds left.
- Your coach gives you a high-five after a good pass.
- A college scout has come to watch you play.
- You get subbed out after making a mistake.
- You win the race by a slim margin.



KNOW YOUR ZONE!

Have a plan to...



**YELLOW
ZONE**

**GREEN
ZONE**



Deep Breathing
Accurate
Cue words/ ~~Positive~~ Self Talk
Mistake Ritual



**RED
ZONE**

**GREEN
ZONE**



3-2-1 Grounding Method:

- 3 things you **SEE**
- 2 things you can **TOUCH**
- 1 thing you **HEAR**



REFLECTION | Know Your Zones

What is the benefit for athletes to “Know their Zone”?

What’s one reset tool you can teach them at practice when you are putting them into high pressure situations?



YOUR MIND IS TRAINABLE

Power of Routines



DISCUSSION | Personal Routines

Share with a partner:

What are some of your team or individual routines your athletes use before practice or matches?





BRITTANY ISENHOUR | NWSL player

NEUROLOGICAL BENEFITS

Familiarity and comfort releases dopamine (feel good neurotransmitter)

PROMOTES BELONGING & TRUST

Shared routines and warm-ups build cohesiveness within a team

BENEFITS OF ROUTINES

REDUCES ANXIETY

Creates predictability & structure and sense of control

HELPS FOCUS

Frees up mental space so you can focus on execution not uncertainty

ENHANCES CONFIDENCE

Activates the cerebellum & basal ganglia; increases motor skills and coordination

REFLECTION | Poutine with Gravy

How would this impact you before training or game?



DISCUSSION | Cell Phone

How would this impact you before training or game?





“

One thing that has been learned is that phone use can **surge dopamine and cortisol**, a hormone released by our adrenal glands, resulting in **lower confidence** and **sluggish decision-making.** ”

Larissa Mills compares looking at your phone before a game to eating poutine, the heavy Canadian delicacy of French fries, cheese curds, and brown gravy.

Larissa Mills

Director of Mental Game Academy
Specializing in Brain Functionality in athletes

DISCUSSION | Phone Routines

What are some beneficial uses for a phone before a game and what are some detrimental ones?

What are some positive strategies you can implement around phone use?



POSITIVE PHONE ROUTINES

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graph TD; A((POSITIVE PHONE ROUTINES)) --> B((Designate "phone-free" training blocks)); A --> C((Use phones for communication not scrolling)); A --> D((Use a team speaker/playlist));
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Designate
“phone-free”
training blocks

Use phones for
communication not
scrolling

Use a team
speaker/playlist



COMMITMENT

What will you commit to as you go back to your team?

Breathwork

- “Calm down switch”
- Physiological sigh
- Recognize stress in your body

Nervous System Regulation

- Know your zones
- Train your reset
- Practice 3-2-1 grounding

Power of Routines

- Create a positive pre-game routine
- Share your routine with a teammate
- Positive phone routines

ATHLETE RESOURCES

(sent to coaches)

PCA RESOURCE ZONE



TRENDING CONTENT

EXPLORE

Resource Zone

STRENGTHEN SELF THE MENTAL GAME TOOLKIT



Mental skills give athletes an edge when it matters most - under pressure, after mistakes, and in big moments. When athletes train their minds to handle challenges, they build confidence, resilience, focus, and emotional control that they can use in sports, school, relationships, and everyday life.

The following tools help athletes train their minds and improve their mental game:

BREATHWORK

Taking slow, deep breaths sends a message to the body to calm down. It slows the heartbeat, relaxes muscles, and promotes clear thinking. When the body is calm, the brain can perform, allowing athletes to maintain composure and execute in tough circumstances.

The physiological sigh is a simple breathing tool that helps athletes calm their body in high-stress moments. It slows the heart rate, lowers stress, and increases calm focus when they start to feel overwhelmed.

ACTIVITY: PRACTICE THE PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH BY FOLLOWING THESE STEPS:

1. Inhale through the nose
2. Top it off with a second, short inhale (before exhaling)
3. Long, slow exhale through the mouth.

SPORTS DONE RIGHT CHANGES LIVES

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The Mental Game
Workshop Summary Toolkit

988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE

Suicide and
Crisis Lifeline

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO YOUTH SPORTS

Please complete
the evaluation



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