



Developing Mental Toughness

A workbook for Lawn Bowls

The general aim of this workbook is assist with the development of the mental skills required for repeatable high performance across all settings, and to understand how these skills can enhance their mental toughness during tournament performances.

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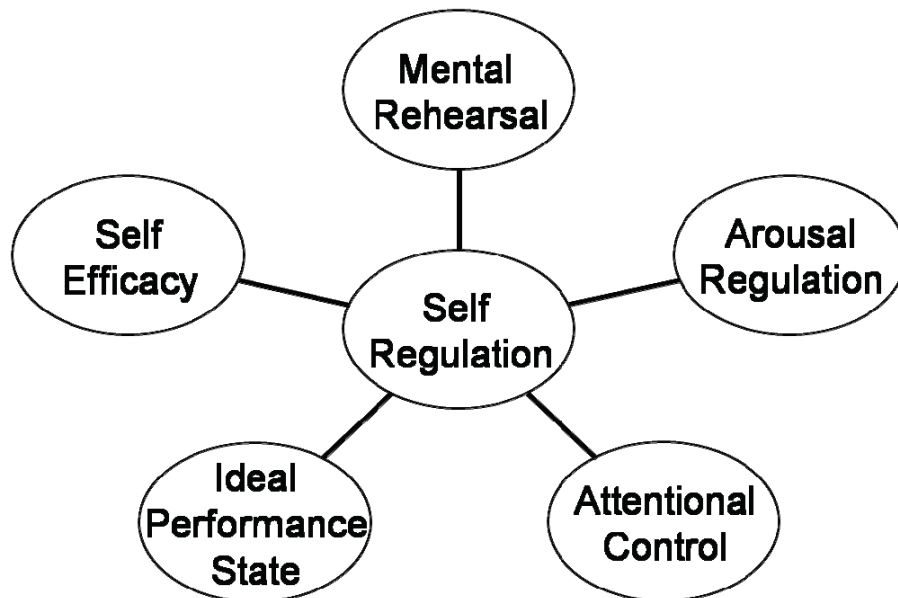
How to Use This Workbook

1. It is recommended that you should carefully read the definition of each mental skill, and the theory regarding each topic before attempting the exercises. It is best to do this in a quiet environment away from distractions.
2. All exercises should be completed honestly and truthfully.
3. For each of the seven mental skills topics introduced in this workbook there is a working definition of the area, followed by theoretical principles of each skill. The application of this mental skill is subsequently illustrated and developed with the practical exercises provided.
4. It is important to realise that these mental skills are like any other bowling skill. They require practice; both during training and competition.
5. Optimum learning will be achieved when these skills are practiced in conjunction with physical practice.
6. Knowledge of these skills alone is not enough to improve your performance; you need to apply these skills to achieve performance improvements.

**YOU CANNOT DISCOVER NEW OCEANS UNLESS YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO LOSE
SIGHT OF THE SHORE**

Introduction

“Sport psychology is the study of psychological and mental factors that influence, and are influenced by, participation in sport, exercise and physical activity, and the application of this knowledge to everyday settings.”



Mental skills are skills that enhance the mental factors that influence performance. There are 6 main mental skill families, all of which can influence performance. Those which have been identified as important for developing mental toughness and being mentally tough include:

1. Motivation and commitment
2. Concentration and focus
3. The ability to handle pressure
4. Self-belief and optimism
5. Resilience
6. Positive Perfectionism
7. Sport Intelligence

THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO THE MIDE EXCEPT THOSE THAT YOU ACKNOWLEDGE

1. Motivation & Commitment

Two of the most important attributes necessary for success in any endeavour are motivation and commitment. Motivation can be defined as an “insatiable internal desire to be the best you can be” and often concerns both the direction and intensity of effort an athlete expends in the pursuit of excellence. A bowler’s commitment to the sport can be determined by the where and how much effort she or he dedicates to improving performance.

It is well known that motivation can:

- Improve performance
- Make training challenging
- Improve quality of performance during training
- Clarify expectations
- Foster persistence
- Facilitate pride, satisfaction, and self-confidence

There are several levels of motivation that explain why athletes participate in sport, ranging from no reason for participation (amotivation) to an absolute pleasure of performing the activity (intrinsic motivation). The full range of motivation levels are presented in the table below. Ultimately, the aim of all athletes is to move towards the intrinsic end of the continuum, and find true pleasure in performing their sport.

**THE MOST DIFFICULT TASKS ARE CONSUMMATED NOT BY A SINGLE BURST OF
ENERGY OR EFFORT, BUT BY CONSISTENT DAILY APPLICATION OF THE BEST YOU
HAVE WITHIN YOU**

O. Mandino

The self-determination continuum

Motivation	Regulatory Style	Description
Amotivation	Nonregulation	An athlete has no sense of personal control or reason to participate
Extrinsic motivation	External regulation	An athlete is driven by a desire for external rewards
	Introjected regulation	An athlete feels that <i>have</i> to participate
	Identified regulation	An athlete participates because she or he knows the activity is beneficial, even if it is not fun
Intrinsic motivation	Internal motivation	An athlete participates in the sport because it gives her or him great satisfaction

Success and failure in sport often depend on an athlete's perception of whether she or he has reached her or his personal goals. In other words, whether an athlete perceives an outcome as a success or failure depends on how he or she defines success or failure in the first place.

Setting goals is an activity that helps athletes to define their personal achievements, stay motivated, and demonstrate their commitment to achieving sporting success. A goal can be defined as attaining a specific standard of proficiency on a task, usually within a specified time limit. Specifically, it is the process of selecting desirable targets or objectives, which can be applied on a personal or group (i.e., team) level.

OBSTACLES ARE WHAT YOU SEE WHEN YOU TAKE YOUR EYES OFF THE GOAL

Exercise 1.1 – Banquet Exercise

To help you create a clear vision of your goals, imagine that you are the guest of honour at a banquet, celebrating the end of an illustrious career as a competitive lawn bowler. Your friends, family, fellow competitors and any anybody else who matters to you will be at the banquet. Some of them have been asked to comment on your career highlights as both a person and an athlete.

- Write down some key points that you would like the speakers to say about you that would make you feel like your career was illustrious and successful.

- Now think about these points and turn them into goal statements for the present.

Exercise 1.2 - Goal Pyramid

Mission Statement:

Long-Term Goal:

Identify Steps to Reach Long-term Goal:

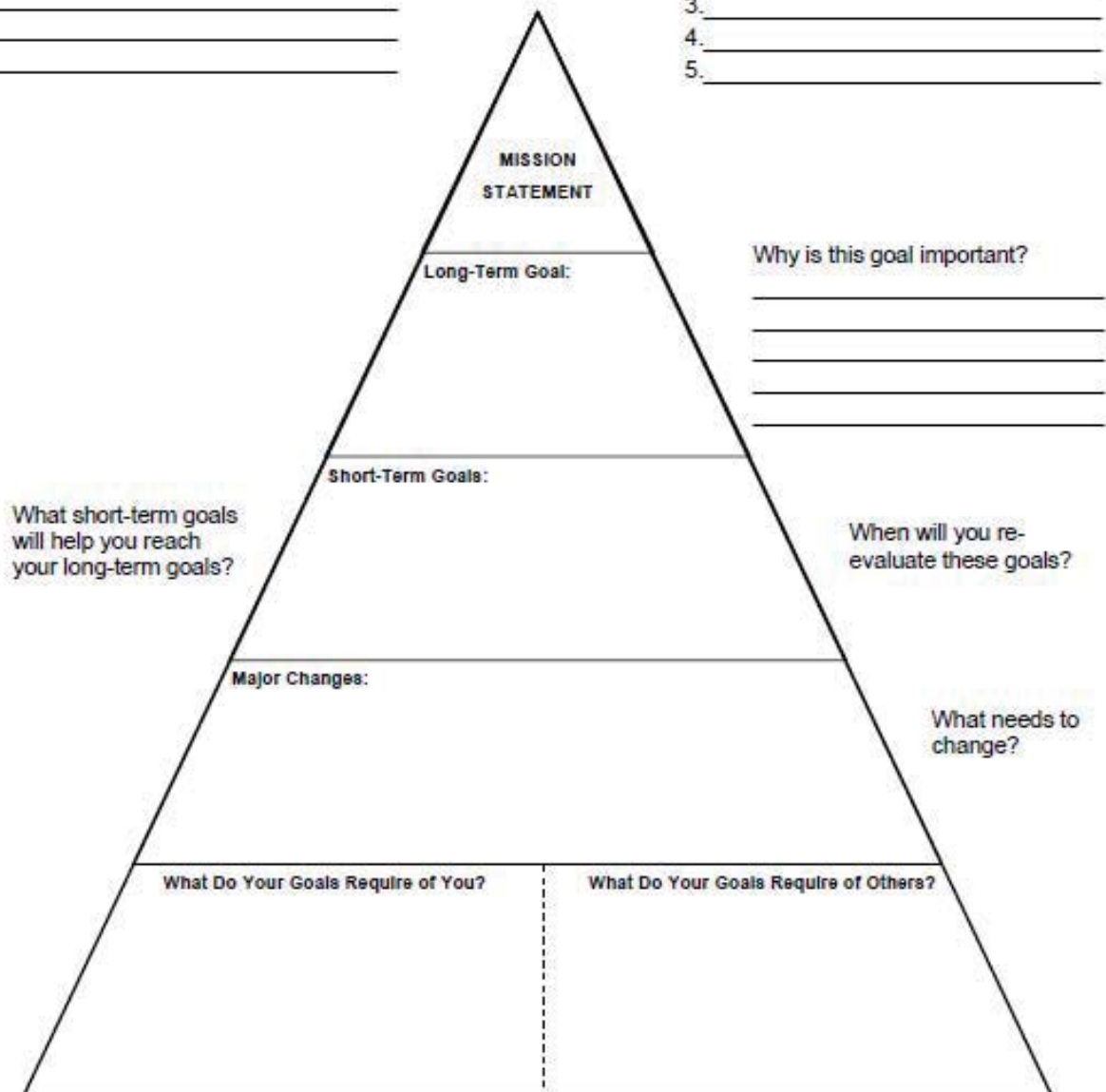
1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Exercise 1.3 –S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goal setting

Specific Goal

- “What do you really (specifically) want to achieve?”

- “What do you have to do?”

- “How will you go about doing it?”

- “Who can help me?”

Measurable

- “How will I measure my progress?”

Appealing

- “How inspiring is this goal?”

Realistic

- “How realistic is this goal for me?”

Timed

- “When do you want to have achieved this goal?”

Evaluated

- “How will you know you have achieved it?”

Re-set

- “Do I need to make changes/modifications to this goal?”

A WINNER MAKES COMMITMENTS TO A GOAL. A LOSER ONLY MAKES PROMISES

Exercise 1.4 - Work ethic: Rate Your Performance

Following each training session this week/month, rate your effort on the scale below. Your main set will be what you do for the bulk of your training session, the main focus, for example either a scratch match, or mock up of a game, simulation training etc.

Training Session	Main Set	Score (Effort)
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		Warm-up 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Drills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Main Set 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Overall 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Exercise 1.5 – Identifying Squad Role Models

Try and list some role models from your squad who you feel are hard working and include why you selected these bowlers.

Name	Reason for Choice

BURY YOUR I CAN'TS AND REPLACE THEM WITH I CAN AND I WILL

2. Focus and Concentration

Focus refers to a bowler's ability to block out all distractions and concentrate on completing the set task. To do so, successful bowlers focus on relevant cues (important bits of information), remained focused on the task and are aware of changes as they happen. Elite athletes believed that they performed better when they focused on the processes (steps to reach goals) rather than the outcome (end result). For example during training doing the drills correctly rather than focusing on how many drills were to be completed or using cue words to perform better rather than just going through the motions. During competitions focusing on the process means playing your best game rather than trying to beat someone else.

Types of Attentional Control

Before we learn how to control our focus, we must first understand the different types of attentional style. Within attentional control are two specific attentional dimension; *width* (refers to amount of stimuli the athlete is required to filter) and *direction* (refers to the environment in which the stimuli exist). The following are four types of attentional focus:

- (1) **Broad** – an athlete views several things that rapidly occur at once
- (2) **Narrow** – an athlete responds to one or two cues only
- (3) **Internal** – an athlete directs their attention to their thoughts (behind own eyes)
- (4) **External** – an athlete directs their attention outside their body (movie camera)

EXTERNAL			
BROAD	Broad-External	Narrow-External	NARROW
	Total awareness of everything that is going on around you	Directs you to deal with select information from outside self	
BROAD	Broad-Internal	Narrow-Internal	NARROW
	Direct your attention to deal with multiple stimuli at once	Directs your attention to deal with select information from within	
INTERNAL			

Exercise 2.1 – The Three Minute Test

1. Read everything before doing anything.
2. Print your name in the upper right-hand corner of this page.
3. Circle the word 'name' in sentence two.
4. Draw five small squares in the upper left-hand corner of this paper.
5. Call your name out aloud.
6. Write your name again under the title of this page.
7. Next to the title write 'Yes', 'Yes', 'Yes'.
8. Draw a circle around sentence five.
9. Put an 'X' in the lower left-hand corner of this page.
10. If you are enjoying this test say 'Yes'. If not, say 'No'.
11. Loudly call out your last name when you reach this point in the test.
12. On the right hand side of the page, multiply 66 by 7.
13. Draw a rectangle around the word 'paper' in sentence number four.
14. If you think you have followed the directions correctly to this point, call out 'I have'.
15. On the left hand side of this page add 69 and 98.
16. Count in your normal speaking voice from 10 to 1 backwards.
17. Stand up, turn around once and sit down.
18. Say out loud, 'I am nearly finished, I have followed directions'.
19. If you are the first to this point say, 'I am the leader in following directions'.
20. Now that you have finished reading carefully, as instructed in sentence one, do only sentence number 2.

When training and during competition it is essential to maintain a moderately high level of attention while concentrating on performing tasks correctly. It is beneficial for athletes to remain focused on relevant cues, to stay focused and to be aware of changes as they happen. With this in mind, athletes should be completely involved in the present and develop the ability to change between the four types of attention (internal, external, broad, narrow).

Defining Attentional Control

- **Attention** – The window to consciousness. It is a cognitive process whereby a person directs and maintains awareness of both *internal* and *external* stimuli detected by the senses.
- **Concentration** – The ability to select and maintain an appropriate attentional focus. It is a natural, relaxed and passive state of mind that allows the athlete to receive and interpret relevant information. Concentration cannot be forced nor distractions actively eliminated, as doing so reduces concentration.
- **Focus** – The ability to bring all attentional processes under control and effectively direct them to the task at hand while at the same time blocking out all distractions. Focusing includes changing the dimension of attention (i.e. *width* or *direction*)

Concepts of Attentional Control

Attentional control is the ability to effectively manage those attentional processes that impact upon performance. Optimal performance depends primarily on the following attentional skills:

- Focusing on relevant cues
- Remain focused
- Be aware of changes as they happen

IF YOU ARE TRULY FOCUSED NOTHING WILL DISTRACT YOU. IF YOU ARE NOT TRULY FOCUSED EVERYTHING WILL DISTRACT YOU

Exercise 2.2 – Critical moments and cues

What are some critical moments that occur in a match?

What are some critical cues that you need to pay attention to?

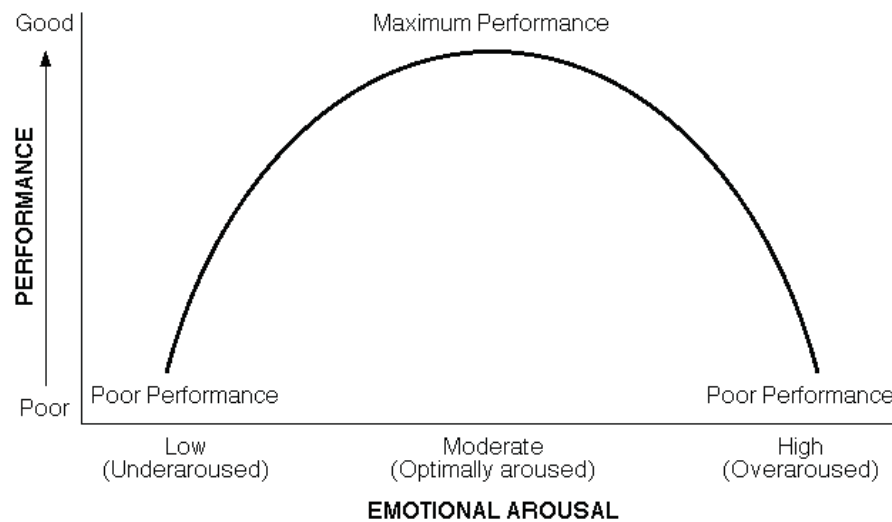
What distractions or irrelevant information may be present?

What can you do to prepare for some of these critical moments and cues?

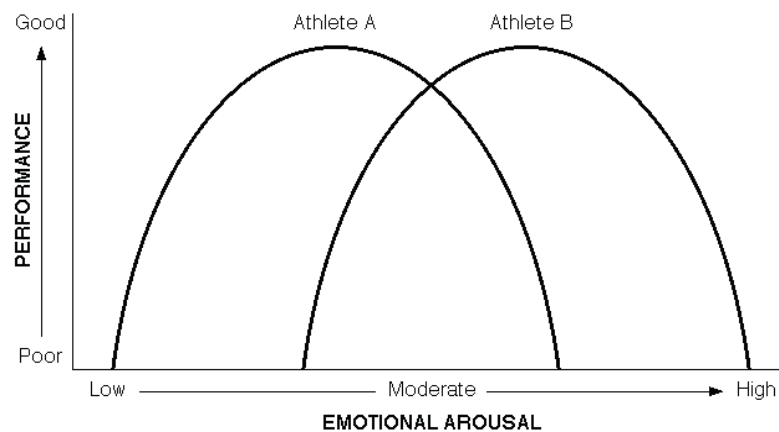
**IT'S NOT THE SITUATION...IT'S YOUR REACTION TO THE SITUATION THAT
DETERMINES THE OUTCOME**

3. Handling Pressure

Your ability to handle pressure and control your levels of arousal will often dictate whether you win or lose a match. For example, if you are under aroused, or over aroused your performance will be compromised.



However everyone is different. Athlete A's optimal level of arousal may be much lower than athlete B. For that reason it is important that when playing with a partner or in a larger rink, you talk with your team members to find out how much encouragement they may want or need to perform at their best.



Another strategy to help you control your arousal is to have pre-performance routines in place leading up to the event. These routines will effectively allow you to prepare for the upcoming competition, without you wasting unnecessary emotional energy. Similarly, it is very important that you have contingency plans in place. If you are prepared for the worst, it won't affect you as greatly if or when it happens.

Exercise 3.1 – Relaxation

Breathing properly is relaxing and can influence performance by increasing the amount of oxygen in the blood. By increasing the oxygen in the blood, we increase the energy carried to the muscles. Some breathing exercises are explained below:

1. *Sighing with exhalation* – inhale slowly and hold your breath for 10 seconds, then exhale through your mouth with a slight sigh. This will release any tension in your body.
2. *Rhythmic breathing* – inhale to a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, exhale to a count of 4 and hold for a count of 4.
3. *Progressive Relaxation* – tense each major muscle group (calves, quads, hamstrings...) for 5-7 seconds and then relax. Work your way through each muscle group, starting at the feet, until you feel relaxed

Exercise 3.2 – Pre-performance routines for your preparation phase

Time	Action/s	Cue words
The night before		
The morning of		
Travel to venue		

THE BEST WAY TO FEEL READY FOR A PERFORMANCE IS TO BE READY

Exercise 3.3 – Pre-performance routines for your match phase

Time	Action/s	Cue words
Warm-up		
Just before your turn		
Your first bowl		
Your second bowl		
And then?		

Other notes:

WE TEND TO GET WHAT WE EXPECT

4. Self-belief & Optimism

Self belief is that confidence in your ability to achieve that which you set out to do. Self-belief can be understood as:

- A set of evaluating thoughts that athletes tend to indulge in about events and facts that happen to them.
- A way to overcome any built in negative conditions or emotions by systematically erasing these and replacing them with positive thoughts and feelings that provide the athletes with better direction and control.

There are four preparatory factors that can lead to increased self-belief:

- *Performance accomplishments* - success in a specific task, particularly if the task is difficult or if lots of effort has been expended
- *Vicarious experience* - seeing somebody else perform the task successfully or watching yourself perform the task successfully (e.g. role model)
- *Verbal persuasion* (encouragement) - most effective if the person presenting it is perceived to be trustworthy and credible (e.g. coach)
- *Physiological state* – refers to an athlete's interpretation of their physiological arousal – self-belief can be enhanced if physical sensations are interpreted as a signal that the body has been activated and the athlete is therefore ready to perform optimally.

Self-talk is a component of our self-belief and refers to the conversations we have in our mind. These internal dialogues can either help or hinder our performance, so it is important to focus on positive self-talk. Self-talk is often described as a collection of evaluating beliefs and these beliefs influence our thoughts and actions.

- Negative – irrational, destructive and inappropriate thoughts.
- Positive – rational, constructive and appropriate thoughts.

Problematic Self-Statements

Negative self-talk statements can be grouped into one or more of the following seven categories:

- (1) **Overgeneralisation** – Jumping to conclusions based on a single experience.
- (2) **Polarized Thinking** – Situations or things appear as black or white.
- (3) **Filtering** – Take one perspective while deliberately ignoring others
- (4) **Catastrophising** – Focus on the worst possible thing that can happen
- (5) **Personalisation** – Taking things personally.
- (6) **Emotional Reasoning** – Athletes base their thinking on feelings.
- (7) **Blaming** – Place blame *externally* when things go wrong.

Techniques to Enhance Self-Statements

To overcome negative self-talk statements, athletes can employ one or more of the following five techniques:

- (1) **Awareness** – Becoming *fully* aware when dialogue is detrimental to performance.
- (2) **Self-Monitoring** – Keep a record of their thoughts in a diary, journal or log book.
- (3) **Thought Stopping** – Stops negative thoughts *before* they become harmful.
- (4) **Reframing** – Reframe any negative thoughts into positive ones.
- (5) **Affirmations** – A clear statement of what the athlete needs or wants to do.

When thinking of your self-talk, here are some questions you may wish to answer.

- When do I talk to myself?
- What do I say to myself?
- What thoughts occur?
- Are these positive or negative thoughts?
- How often do I have these thoughts?
- How do these thoughts affect my performance?

Exercise 4.1 - When I talk to myself, what do I say?

- When I perform well:

- When I perform poorly:

How frequently do I talk to myself?

- In training

Not at all

1

2

3

4

Very often

5

- In competition

Not at all

Very often

Prior	1	2	3	4	5
During	1	2	3	4	5
After	1	2	3	4	5

Exercise 4.2 - Turning Negatives to Positives

Think of a few negative self statements that you sometimes think of and would like to change to positive ones.

Negative Self Statement → Positive Self Statement	
e.g. This training is tiresome. I don't need to do it.	Yes this is tiresome. But I'll be a better bowler for finishing it.

Exercise 4.3 – Thought Stoppage

The technique of thought stoppage is a very effective method for eliminating negative thoughts. It involves concentrating on the undesired thought briefly and then using a cue or trigger to stop the thought and clear your mind. Thought stoppage is an effective method for eliminating negative thoughts and restoring self-belief.

The steps are:

- Identify negative or destructive self-talk
- Use a trigger to disrupt or stop the undesirable thought
- The trigger can be a word such as “stop” or “focus”, or it can be a physical action.
- The trigger utilised must be natural and meaningful to the individual and must be used consistently
- Replace the negative self-talk with more productive alternatives.

For example:

- During a tough training set, I say to myself...
“This training is too hard. I don’t believe that I can do it”
- Trigger = FOCUS!
- Positive statement...
“I’ve done hard sets before and got through them. It’s only going to make me stronger”

CONTROL YOUR OWN THOUGHTS, OTHERWISE THEY WILL SURELY CONTROL YOU

Exercise 4.4 - Positive Affirmations

Five positive affirmations I will tell myself everyday!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Everything you say or do is a reflection of the inner you!

5. Resilience

“A collection of attitudes, behaviours and emotions that enable an athlete to physically, psychologically and emotionally prepare for and engage with any adversity, obstacle or pressure, and begin experiencing positive adaptation during and following the encounter with the event.”

Characteristics:

The following characteristics were identified by elite athletes as ones that allowed them to overcome any adversity. Some of these characteristics we have already been defined and introduced through various exercises earlier in the workbook. We will briefly revisit each of those characteristics before developing the new ones.

- **Self-belief:** Having confidence in your ability to tackle any task
- **Bouncing Back:** Identifying the steps required to overcome an adversity
 - *Handling pressure:* controlling training and competition pressure
 - *Persistence:* never giving up in any situation
 - *Positivity:* always looking for positives in any situation
- **Motivation:** The driving force behind your reason for training
 - *Enjoyment:* A sense of achievement from being challenged, setting goals, understanding effort and a general love of swimming.
- **Perspective:** The ability to think of any situation in a positive way
 - *Focus:* The ability to block out all distractions and focus only on the current task.
 - *Making Sacrifices:* the discipline to sacrifice distractions, allowing you to focus on your goals.
- **Knowledgeable:** A desire to learn more about themselves, by talking to others and gaining feedback
 - *Problem solver:* Able to recognise a problem and quickly find solutions
- **Work Ethic:** Prepared to train harder and smarter than others
 - *Commitment:* Complete dedication to swimming
 - *Goal-oriented:* The knowledge that clear goals will map the path
 - *Pain Tolerance:* An inner strength to withstand swimming pain

Bouncing Back:

Bouncing back refers to the processes or steps a resilient bowler uses to overcome a setback challenge or pressure (adversity). The characteristics of bouncing back that resilient bowlers use to overcome adverse situations include:

- *Positivity* – always looking for positives in any situation
- *Persistence* – never giving up in any situation
- *Handling pressure* – controlling training and competition pressure.

Elite athletes have identified the following situations as times when they were required to bounce back:

- Dealing with injury – staying positive without being able to train/compete
- Competition success/failure – overcoming unexpected success/failure
- Dealing with fatigue – persisting with training despite feeling fatigued
- Training environment – remaining positive despite poor weather conditions

Exercise 5.1 – Self reflection

When have you “bounced back” in the past?

What was the situation?

What was your self talk like? What did you say to yourself at that time?

What did you do to recover from the situation?

What was the outcome?

How did that feel when you successfully “bounced back”?

The ability to bounce back often depends on your ability to alter your arousal level. The mental and physical techniques described below can be used to change your level of arousal. For example, if you are nervous before a game, you may stretch more to release any tension in your body.

Physical (somatic) Strategies

Under aroused

1. Increase breathing rate (short and deep)
2. Introduce cheering and yelling
3. Play lively or loud music
4. Increase exercise intensity
5. Take a cold shower

Over aroused

1. Take at least 3 diaphragmatic (deep) breaths
 2. Take one or two release breaths
 3. Stretch to relax muscle tension
 4. Shadow technical aspects of technique (slow-mode)
 5. Use progressive muscle relaxation, or biofeedback
-

Mental (cognitive) Strategies

Under aroused

1. Give yourself a severe pep talk
2. Stress the importance of the competition to self and others
3. Consider the strengths of the opposition
4. Set yourself a challenging goal
5. Complete a full pre-competitive workout

Over aroused

1. Focus on your task "what is it I have to do....?"
 2. Use "thought stoppage" to replace negative thoughts
 3. Use 'switch on, down, and off' concentration skills
 4. Use visualisation techniques
 5. Use autogenic training
-

Exercise 5.2 - What works for you?

Which of these strategies have you used in the past?

Was this strategy effective in that situation (and if not why)?

Exercise 5.3 – Pressure Situations

	Pressure Situation	Strategy
<i>Training</i>		
<i>Competition</i>		
<i>Other</i>		

THERE IS NO FAILURE ONLY FEEDBACK

ALWAYS REHERSE YOUR NEXT MOVE IN YOUR CREATIVE IMAGINATION

Mental Toughness Summary

Without referring back, for each topic, list at least one useful skill you learnt from the workbook.

Motivation: _____

Commitment (work ethic): _____

Focus: _____

Concentration: _____

Handling Pressure: _____

Self-Belief: _____

Resilience: _____

**DONT JUDGE EVERY DAY BY THE HARVEST YOU REAP
BUT BY THE SEEDS YOU PLANT**

NOTES

