

ATHLETE'S MENTAL EDGE WORKBOOK

MENTAL GAME
STRATEGIES FOR
SUPERIOR
CONFIDENCE



WORKBOOK 3



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MENTAL GAME STRATEGIES FOR SUPERIOR CONFIDENCE



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Mental Edge Workbook 3: Mental Game Strategies for Superior Confidence

Session Objective

To learn to be proactive with your confidence prior to competition and develop a stable level of self-confidence.

What You Need to Know

What is self-confidence? Self-confidence is how strongly you *believe in your ability* to execute any skill or task. Why is confidence so crucial to your success? Well, without a healthy dose of confidence, you simply can't perform at your best.

Confidence helps you let go of mistakes quicker and helps you to stay calm and composed. It also allows you take risks and play assertively instead of tentatively. Confidence helps you trust in your skills. With high confidence, your overall mental game is better.

Confidence develops over many years as you practice and perform. It comes from past performance, success, training, and preparation. You can also derive confidence from the belief that you are physically talented. You'll find two general ways to boost and maintain a high level of confidence.

1. Learn how be proactive with confidence instead of reactive.
2. Understand and overcome the top confidence killers.

How You Derive Confidence?

The table below identifies examples of how you might derive confidence.

Sources of Confidence	Sources of Confidence
❖ Past success in your sport	❖ Mental preparation
❖ An effective practice plan	❖ Study and preparation
❖ Immediate performance	❖ Mental game coaching
❖ Positive comments from others	❖ Coping well under pressure
❖ Supportive people in your life	❖ Positive rapport with coach
❖ Quality practice or training	❖ Proper nutrition
❖ Quality coaching	❖ Fitness level or conditioning
❖ Belief in your physical talent	❖ Ideal weather conditions
❖ Your method or technique	❖ Game plan or strategy
❖ Your equipment	❖ Level of your competition
❖ Warm up routine	❖ Comfortable with environment

Exercise 1: How Do You Gain Confidence?

Ranking your sources of confidence helps improve awareness of how you can develop confidence.

Rank your top five sources of confidence in your sport using the examples mentioned above. You may also add other things that help you to feel confident in sports, which may not be listed in the table above.

My Top Sources of Confidence

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Exercise 2: What Sources of Confidence Can You Control?

What sources of confidence, you listed above, are under your control? For example, your practice and preparation are under your control.

Conversely, what others say about you is not under your control. The key is to focus on the sources that you can control (and not fret about the ones that you cannot control), which will boost your confidence. List your top five sources of confidence that *you can control*.

Sources of Confidence Under My Control

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

You, and only you, are responsible for your confidence! That's why it's called SELF-confidence. If you let other people or competitive conditions dictate how confident you feel, your confidence will go up and down. For example, do you allow poor weather or a bad call from an official influence your level of confidence? If so, you let things outside of your control dictate your confidence level.

Exercise 3: Your Confidence Résumé

The number one way to be proactive with your confidence is to understand what supports it, which we call a confidence resume. Your task is to write a confidence résumé, which includes your past successes or accomplishments, strengths of your game, and anything else that helps you feel confident.

Use the questions below to help you get started with your confidence résumé:

1. What are your strengths as an athlete in your sport?
2. What have others complimented you about (e.g., your technique, your commitment, determination, ability to overcome adversity, etc.)?
3. What have you accomplished in your sport that you are proud of (e.g. local, state, and national competition, etc.)?
4. How would you describe your game to others if you took the most positive stance possible?
5. What can you say about your practice routine that gives you confidence?
6. What can you say about your commitment or work ethic in sports?
7. What can you say about the coaching you receive that helps you feel confident?
8. What can you say about your mental game that gives you confidence in your ability?
9. What can you say about your fitness, diet, or other routines you use that give you confidence?

My Confidence Résumé

Use the space below to write your confidence résumé:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

You don't have to stop at 12 things to support your confidence. Try to list as many as possible here.

Controlling Self-Doubt and Other Confidence Killers

Doubt is the exact opposite of confidence. When you have self-doubt, you lack conviction that you can perform well, and it's much harder to feel confident.

The objective of this exercise is to learn how to keep self-doubt in check. You can't leave doubt unchecked to run wild in your mind. To help you

stay confident, you must act quickly to stop doubt, which you'll learn how to do in Exercise 3.

Rebutting Your Self-Doubt

First, make a list of the top five doubts you have had about your performance, including before, during and after competition. You might notice two kinds of doubts: direct and subtle. A direct doubt, for example, is when a tennis player tells himself, "My backhand stinks. I can't hit a single backhand today!" An example of a subtle doubt is, "I wonder if I can play well in these conditions today?"

Here are some other areas you might experience self-doubt. Doubt about...

- Outcomes or how I'll perform today
- Level of physical preparation
- Fitness level going into competition
- How others think I can perform
- How well I stack up to the competition
- How strong my opponent(s) are
- Ability to perform a specific skill or play
- Performing well after an injury

Use the following example to help you complete this exercise:

Exercise 4: Rebutting Your Self-Doubt

1. Write down your doubts as if you're thinking aloud: "I hope I practiced enough to play well in today's competition."
2. Refute or rebut each doubt: "I have practiced effectively this week. I trust my practice and I deserve to feel confident."

My Top 5 Doubts	Rebuttal Statement
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Exercise 5: Tap into Confident Self-Talk

If you are like many athletes, you have an inner dialogue called “self-talk.” Your self-talk can either help you to feel confident: “I enjoy the challenge of performing today,” or hurt your confidence: “I stink today. I should find another sport to play.” Using proactive, positive self-talk before, during, and after competition can help you control your confidence level.

The objective is to compare and contrast your self-talk when you performed well versus when you performed poorly. Was your self-talk positive or negative? What things did you think about or tell yourself about your ability to perform or compete?

Describe Your Self-Talk When Not Performing Well

Exercise 6: Proactive Self-Talk Statements to Boost Confidence

Pick one task you perform regularly that could use a confidence boost. This might be a weaker part of your game or a specific skill you want to improve. List five self-talk statements you can use to help you take control of your confidence. For example, "I'm going to nail this three-point shot." Keep your statements short:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

You can extend this exercise to other areas or skills. You should rehearse these statements before your next competition. During competition, use these statements to help instill the feeling of confidence.

Other Tips to Boost Your Confidence

1. How do you view yourself as an athlete? What you think of yourself as an athlete dictates your beliefs and confidence level. For example, if you think you choke under pressure, then you will in fact have trouble staying composed come crunch-time.
2. Be confident, but don't expect that you have to perform your best every time. Manage your expectations about performance. Remember, in Workbook 1, you learned how strict expectations undermine your confidence.
3. Focus on success instead of trying to avoid failure or mistakes. Be sure that your process goals and what you focus on when performing are about what you want to do, not what you don't want to do.
4. Take responsibility for your own confidence. You, and only you, are responsible for your confidence level! You create your own confidence destiny. Do not let immediate results or the first moments of competition dictate how confident you'll feel for the rest of the game.
5. Confidence develops over years of practice and play. You should base your confidence on years of practice and competition, not the most recent shot or game.
6. Be prepared. Expect the unexpected. Things happen during competition that can challenge your composure. You'll want to anticipate as many challenges as possible based on what has unsettled you in the past, such as strong winds, unfair officiating, psych-out attempts from competitors, or unexpected equipment problems.
7. Control the mental images in your mind. Do you see/imagine yourself performing well? Or do you see yourself executing with confidence?

Summary

At any time, you are either thinking confidently about your performance or thinking in ways that undermine confidence. Make the right choice by maintaining confident thoughts and feelings about your performance – be proactive with your confidence.

Don't allow circumstances outside your control, such as tough weather, poor officiating, or your opponent's ability, to influence your confidence level. Take control of your confidence level by being proactive and accepting responsibility for your thoughts and internal dialog.

Your number one priority is proactive confidence. No one can help you feel confident but yourself. Likewise, no one can make you doubt your ability but yourself! Proactive confidence comes from recalling your confidence résumé, using positive self-talk, controlling the images in your mind, and quickly cutting off the feelings and thoughts that destroy confidence.

Pre-Competition Mental Preparation

Please remind yourself of the mental skills you are working on this week in order to help you improve your confidence in practice and competition.

1. Review your confidence résumé every time before you compete.
2. Practice reframing doubts (doubt rebuttals) every time you recognize doubt in your ability.
3. Focus on what you can control in your performance, such as your game plan or strategy. Don't allow the uncontrollables to affect your confidence level, such as wind, your opponent, or official's calls.

4. Pick one skill whereby you want to improve your confidence. Select a powerful self-talk statement you can use to help build this, such as "I've practiced this shot a thousand times. I love this shot."

Post-Competition Mental Game Assessment

After your next competition, please answer a few questions about your mental game. It's best if you answer them on the same day as your competition. After you answer the questions below, **please return your answers via email or fax prior to our next session.**

1. What are two things you did well today in regards to your mental game and performance?
2. What are two things you would like to improve for the next competition?
3. What was your confidence level prior to competition? Did your confidence improve or decrease during competition?
4. At what times did you have any doubts? What were the doubts you had? Did you reframe your doubts?
5. What was your self-talk like today? How well did you counter with positive self-talk when you became negative?
6. What did you learn about staying confident today that you can apply to competition and improve your mental game?