**Study Notes: Psychology of Sport**

**A. Sport Psychology**

**Psychology:** scientific study of the thought process, feelings, and behavior of humans in their interaction with the environment  
**Sport Psychology:** is the study placed within context of sports - how people think, feel, and behave in sporting situations and what mental processes motivate the way they behave in training and competition  
  
**Mental and Physical Connection**  
Connection between brain activity and workings of muscle joints, limbs, and bodily systems  
- generates general mental state prior to athletic event (eg. nervousness might lead to extra stimulus being placed on muscles and the development of "nervous tension")  
- controllable through relaxation exercises and techniques  
  
**Performance States**  
- "in the zone", "auto pilot", "nailed routine": a combo of the right mental commands with flawless physical execution

***- "Ideal Performance State":*** \* complete absence of doubt and fear of failure  
 \* lack of critical thought of performance  
 \* narrow focus of attention; little or no distraction  
 \* sense of effortlessness  
 \* powerful feelings of being "in control"  
 \* feeling that time has "stood still"

**B. Key Terms in Sport Psychology**

***Arousal***- being "psyched up" - athlete feels ready both physically and psychologically to do his or her very best  
- allows athlete to perform at high levels during competition

***Anxiety***- manifested in apprehension, sense of uncertainty  
- muscular tension; "butterflies"  
- must be limited/controlled or channeled to enhance performance

***Relaxation:***- mind-body state with no anxiety, athlete feels "loose", ready to do his/her best  
- psychologists assist over-anxious athletes to relax mind and body to be able to compete effectively  
- breathing, Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), Biological Feedback, Imagery Relaxation

***Motivation***- direction and intensity of effort  
- intensity refers to amount of physical and mental energy  
- direction refers to attraction to certain sport situations

***Concentration***- ability to keep one's focus on task without being distracted  
- sort out info - what is and isn't relevant to performance  
- concentration improved by mental exercises  
- mental tools for athletes to filter out external factors such as distractions, and attempts of opponents to "psyche them out"

***Audience***- some react positively to large crowds and their encouragement  
- others are better suited to settings of isolation  
- tools are used to control responses to audiences

***Fatigue***- mental state where feelings of tiredness can lead to decreases in performance  
- "push through pain" to realize new performance levels

**C. Sport Psychology Factors Affecting Performance**

**Tools to help improve athletic performance**- self-talk  
- imagery/visualization  
- hypnosis  
- relaxation/arousal regulation  
- improving motivation  
- setting goals  
- developing concentration

***Self-talk***- internal monologue going through one's mind before competition, encouraging one to achieve success  
- can be negative or discouraging  
- athletes need to regulate and control internal talking "positive" way to use it to achieve peak performance

***Imagery/Visualization***- seeing oneself succeeding is a powerful incentive for success, imagery and visualization tools are available to achieve this  
- athletes who benefit from this technique are those who believe it is a powerful tool for athletic enhancement

***Hypnosis***- state of intense concentration in which the mind directs the body to perform certain tasks while blocking out all external stimuli except those essential to those completion of goal  
- two types  
\* hetero-hypnosis: placed under hypnosis by another person  
\* self-hypnosis: placed under hypnosis by self  
- 3 phases  
\* induction: create feelings of relaxation; feels sleepy  
\* hypnotic: able to do suggestions (waking hypnosis)  
\* wake-up: coming out of "trance" upon the therapist's signal

***Relaxation/Arousal Regulation***- enforce a state of relaxation over mind and body leading to enhanced performance by removing anxiety  
- many athletes require help in relaxing and focusing  
- tools include breathing exercises, meditation, imagery

***Developing Concentration***- able to maintain one's focus in the face of distractions: selective attention  
- "choking" result of inability to maintain attenal focus for long enough - or in the right way - achieving success  
- tools include positive self talk, duplicating distractions during practice, cue words

***Improving Motivation***- some degree required for competing at any level  
- desire to gain recognition, to please others, willingness to set goals and achieve them  
- 4 basic principles that relate to athletes:  
\* personal traits vs environment  
\* multiples motives  
\* staying motivated  
\* leadership

***Setting Goals***- can vary widely depending on the athlete  
- need a clear idea of what one wants to achieve in order to accomplish the goal  
\* objective goals: empirically quantifiable (eg breaking a time barrier)  
\* subjective goals: outcomes are harder to quantify (eg becoming a better player)

**- SMART principle, goals should be:**\* Specific - able to be precisely defined  
\* Measureable - able to be qualified  
\* Attainable - within an athlete's limitations  
\* Realistic - attainable within constraints  
\* Timely - achievable within a set time frame

**D. The Quest For Excellence**

**Many Definitions**- attaining personal goals  
- winning certain competitions  
- attaining certain rankings at end of season  
- gains in finance or prestige  
- achieving consistency in training

**Orlick's Wheel of Excellence**  
7 Key Elements  
 - commitment  
 - focused attention  
 - confidence  
 - positive images  
 - mental readiness  
 - distraction control  
 - ongoing learning

According to Orlick, the 7 key concepts of excellence, when taken as a whole, "provide the mental keys that empower you to excel you and free you to become the person and performer you really want to be." Furthermore, "the great news is that each of those elements is within your potential control".

**E. Sport Psychology and Children**

- can have a significant impact on approach to sports from a physical, social, and mental perspective  
- those who perceive themselves as "athletes" and have a positive perception of own abilities and are more likely to continue to participate as they grow older  
- children respond well to praise and encouragement, and enjoyment of activities that will help them build skills and confidence  
- children benefit from participation during both games and practices