

Stress Management in Sports

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Abstract: *Stress is usually caused by any kind of emotional or physical stimulus or situation. Sports can be stressful but stress can be managed. The aim of stress management is to learn methods which can be used to help players to control stress and anxiety. Knowing the signs and symptoms and employing stress management skills can help coaches in relieving their own stress, providing support to players and creating a healthy sport culture. Stress management is important for preserving the team atmosphere and personal life outside of work.*

Keywords: Stress, Management, Players, Skills, Stimulus

1. Introduction

Stress is a part of life and usually it is unavoidable. Every individual passes through some kind of stress at different phases of life and players are no exception to it. As for the sports environment, difficult relationship with team mates, or coaches, unrealistic or unclear performance expectations, time demands, lack of clarity regarding role definition within the team, consistent critical feedback coupled with little or no communication of support or encouragement, intolerance for mistakes or mistakes being exclusively met with punishment, expectations of perfection, fear of failure and limited definitions of success can all contribute to a stressful sport climate. Learning to cope with stress and anxiety are vital to an athlete who has to perform in high pressure situations. The ability to control these feelings of nervousness and apprehension are vital to perform at the top level. Sometime coaches are constantly experimenting on the athletes, whether consciously or not, by seeing how much training they can take. Up to a certain level the athlete improves in performance to a measurable extent but eventually there comes a point when the training is too much. The athlete becomes tired and eventually breaks down. This breakdown is often seen in the form of listlessness, loss of appetite, poor sleep pattern accompanied by susceptibility to infections. Conversely the athlete who has right training load seems full of energy and is hardly ever ill. The fit athlete should be able to withstand stress better than the ordinary person because he or she is trained well to perform under pressure. However if the athlete is training too hard or competing too much, a slight increase the total stress can push them over the top. It is a sad fact that fitness is not the same as health, the highly tuned athlete may be less healthy than who maintains a high degree of fitness without going over his physical limits.

Most often people talk about different types of stress like relationship stress, work stress, or parenting stress. There are few kinds of stress that are related to a particular stage of life such as pregnancy, ageing, teens, menopausal etc. Risk factors contributing to uncontrollable stress include medical illness, lack of social support network, social and family problems and family problems. There are various types of stresses and different ways to cope with them.

Practice/ Training stress: A big mistake that players make is to train too hard too fast. Instead training should be gradually progressive and be according to handling capacity of body and giving adequate rest between the sessions.

Competition Stress: The competition which gives more stress than body can handle should be avoided or should be selected carefully. If competition is done in more planned way, more success and less stress is anticipated. Moreover this will help in increasing the self confidence of the player.

Emotional/ Everyday Stress: A player who is moving, breaking up the partner, going through other life changing events will have decreased performance. These types of situations are rarely under our control but we can adjust other aspects of life so as to diminish stress load. Here training therapy will work good. Never completely avoid physical exercise when you are stressed, as exercise as long as it is not overloaded helps in reducing overall stress. Also sports under controlled conditions helps positive mood swings by releasing endorphins in body. It increases self esteem, relieves mental stress by increasing quality of sleep.

Miscellaneous Stress: Major part is played by rejection by friends, coaches, and society thereby leading to feeling of loneliness and stress. Socialization helps in relieving stress in form of motivation, playing as a team, and chasing mutual goals. This will significantly reduce anxiety and steer you away from depression. This can be further nurtured by positive coaching and support from team members.

There is both good (Eustress) and bad (Distress) stress. For instance, you may be an individual who enjoys finishing the work report or leading your team down the field during the two minute drill. Thus you should determine what is good stress for you and what increases your performance at work, on the field, in the gym or in the class room. Here are some helpful tactics that can be used for avoiding or relieving stress:

Be Optimistic: Switching to positive thoughts at the time of stress helps a lot. This is good for player as well as coaches so that their thinking can be matched and a positive environment can be created in the team as well as on the ground, thereby increasing the self esteem of all. Positive mental attitude books play a great role in the positive transformation of the mind.

Take Rest: It is very important to take a break depending on the situation. This is important for the players as well as the coaches. This can be done by leaving the office for a walk or vacation with family or friends. After doing this you will become fresh mind for further working. Make sure to

remain in touch with those that matter most. They are important for managing stress and keeping a stable work-life balance.

Personal Exercise: It is the most important tool for the coaches to stay in their physical shape. Moreover Exercising also increases self esteem and body image and setting a good example for the players. Exercise is the most easiest and most rewarding way to relieve stress. Breathing techniques should also be a part of exercise as deep inhaling and exhaling helps in managing stress.

Keeping in touch with Hobbies: Hobbies are an important way to focus on something other than sports and give the mind a break and internal special kind of happiness. Find something to hang on outside of your career.

Counselling: Counselling with professional should be done if required. Professionals have fantastic ideas to cope with stress as they have lot of experience in dealing such situations.

Allocating Work: The best way to stay organized and to alleviate some of your workload is by delegating tasks to coaching assistants. By trusting in the people around them the coaches can significantly reduce their stress levels.

Setting proper schedule: Keeping a proper schedule in any industry, particularly sports is very important. To help keep an organized schedule, invest in a planner with plenty of slots for careful scheduling and room in the margins to make note on certain tasks. Coaches need to stay away from stretching themselves too thin, so remember not to schedule too many obligations. Furthermore, allow ample time to complete each task by blocking of large slots in the schedule for events that take more time to complete.

Team Bonding: Finding a way to talk to the players about the topics other than sports will keep the atmosphere loose and stress level low. Setting up a team building activity at an amusement park, rope course, or some outdoor adventure center can encourage bonding and allow the team to have fun together.

There are several models of stress management, each with proper explanation of the modes for controlling stress. More research is needed to provide better understanding of operation of specific modes for different situations.

2. Conclusion

Stress produces many physical and mental symptoms which vary according to the individual's situation. These may include physical health decline as well as depression. The stress is mainly caused by distinct, measurable life stressors and these stressors can be ranked by median degree of the stress they produce but their effect is also mediated by individual perception, capacity and understanding. The process of stress management is named as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Stress management provides a number of ways to manage anxiety and overall well being. Many practical stress management techniques are available, some for the use by health

professionals and others for self help which may help an individual reduce their levels of stress.

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