



VOLLEYBALLBC



Handling Performance Anxiety

Do you perform well during training or practice but feel anxiety on game day?

Performance anxiety, sometimes otherwise known as “choking”, is described as a decrease in athletic performance due to too much perceived stress. Mental stress on gameday may be rooted in:

- **Having an audience** - You may become overly self-aware of every decision and play you make when you're on the athletic stage.
- **Fear of disappointing others:** Even when a parent or coach is supportive, you may be anxious about disappointing them.
- **High expectations:** Everyone wants to do their best, but internal self-talk can create stress when you set expectations that anything less than perfect is failure.
- **Post-game analysis:** Whether it is from a coach, parent, teammate, or yourself, the post-game analysis weighs on your mindset.
- **Recovering from an injury:** If you get hurt, it can take a long time to restore your confidence.

Remember: Performance anxiety is normal!

It is rarely the actual game but rather the way our self-talk describes it that creates feelings of stress, anxiety and fear. If you choke during competition, understand that you can adjust or control the thoughts you have with the right mental practice.

Turn over for some useful tips!

Helpful Tips

Accept and validate rather than fight or minimize the nervous energy you feel. Know that the adrenaline rush you feel is normal and part of your body's natural preparation. Notice it, but don't focus on it.

Prepare both mentally and physically before an event. Arrive with plenty of time so you aren't rushed. Get a thorough warm-up, do some stretching, and know what is expected.

Practice visualization. Mentally see yourself doing everything right. Positive self-talk is very powerful and can change your attitude and have a positive outcome on your performance.

Focus on the task at hand rather than the outcome. Be present in the moment and avoid thinking too far into the competition or the results.

If you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, **stop and focus only on your breathing.** Focusing on your breathing rhythm will automatically pull you back into the present.

Force a smile. Something as simple as making yourself smile when you are thinking negatively will change your attitude in a split second.

Perform as if you don't care about the outcome. This may help you to enjoy your sport for what it is, another day in your life... not the most important thing in your life.

(www.truesport.org www.expandthereach.ca)



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