

Integrative mind-body training (IMBT) comes from the Eastern tradition with a focus upon achieving a mental state that lends itself to improved attention and self-regulation of the autonomic nervous system (ANS). Western approaches to relaxation have focused almost exclusively upon attention training that can be mentally fatiguing and therefore counterproductive to achieving and maintaining the relaxation response.

Biofeedback training uses instruments to help people control responses of the autonomic nervous system. For example, an athlete monitors an auditory signal of her own heart rate and experiments with different thoughts, feelings, and sensations calculated to slow the heart rate. Once the subject learns to recognize the feelings associated with the reduction of heart rate, the instrument is removed and the athlete tries to control the heart rate without it.

Energizing strategies are of two types: team energizing strategies and individual self-energizing strategies. The matching hypothesis was discussed

as a reminder of the necessity of matching any sort of intervention with the specific needs and symptoms of the athlete. Indiscriminate use of intervention for either relaxation or activation was discouraged.

As the coach prepares for the season, she recognizes the need to set into motion a number of initiatives designed to keep the team focused and energized for an entire season. Strategies discussed to accomplish this aim included team goal setting, use of pep talks by the coach, the use of bulletin boards and posters, generating publicity and news coverage, generating fan support, and effective coach, athlete, and parent interaction.

In addition to mobilizing a team's energy for an entire season, individual athletes need to be able to energize themselves for immediate mobilization. Individual self-energizing strategies designed to accomplish this aim include individual goal setting, liberal use of self-talk and verbal cues, attentional focus, imagery and visualization, and personalized self-activation strategies.

Critical Thought Questions

1. Why would an athlete choose to use an avoidance style of coping as opposed to an approach style? Are these good reasons?
2. Using the two-dimensional coping framework, write three specific coping strategy/style examples that would fit into each quadrant of figure 9.2. Which are the most difficult to write and why?
3. List five stressful situations that you have experienced and identify coping strategies that you have used to address these situations. Classify these coping strategies within the two-dimensional conceptual framework for coping.
4. Identify coping strategies you have used in sport that you also use in real-life nonsport situations.
5. How does self-talk differ from the "trash talk" used by many athletes today?
6. Do you think self-talk can really increase self-confidence and performance? Explain and defend your answer.
7. Little evidence exists to suggest that relaxation procedures by themselves enhance athletic performance. Examine this statement and discuss implications for applied sport psychology.