PSYCOACH

INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY COACHING

Handbook

Promoting athletic well-being through conscious training

European Commission

Welcome!

This guide is designed to be a practical, open resource for coaches, trainers, and sports organizations who want to make the most of their athletes' potential while fostering well-being and inclusivity. Created as part of the PSYCOACH project, promoted and funded by the European Commission, this guide is not only a resource for learning but also a growing body of knowledge, enriched by the experiences and insights of participating coaches and sports professionals.

With this guide, we aim to equip you with the tools to apply conscious, quality-driven training techniques that prioritize both athletic achievement and holistic well-being. Whether you're here to refine your coaching approach, discover new strategies, or contribute your own expertise, we invite you to join this collaborative journey. Let's work together to build a healthier, more inclusive sporting environment for all.
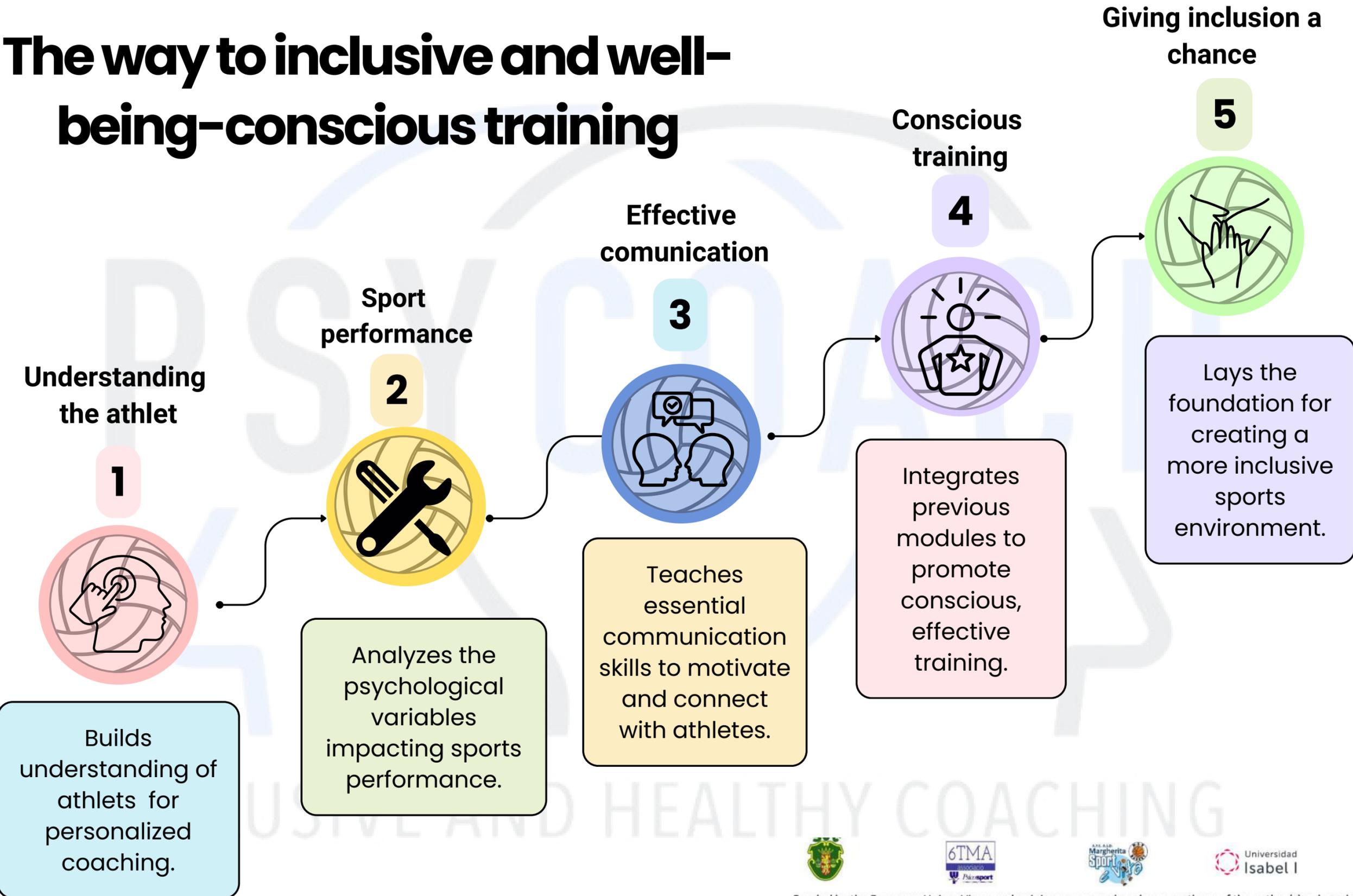
Enjoy the journey!

Introduction

Sports coaching is about instructing, guiding, and skill-building, which is essential for young athletes across Europe. Although specialized certifications exist, many coaches take introductory courses that often skip key psychological components like training psychology, team management, and effective communication. This gap is critical for the well-being and development of young athletes.

The Erasmus-funded PSYCOACH project aims to address this need by providing a psychology-focused training program for coaches and sports club staff. Developed by MSV - Aps Asd Margherita Sport e Vita (Italy), 6tma - Psicosport (Spain), Universidad Internacional Isabel I De Castilla (Spain), and SC Caldas (Portugal), this program builds self-confidence and well-being in athletes while promoting healthier choices and optimized training experiences.

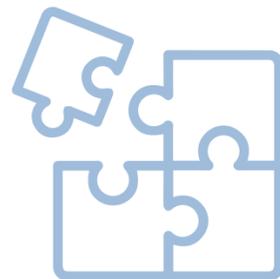# The way to inclusive and well-being-conscious training

Understanding the athlet

1

Builds understanding of athlets for personalized coaching.

Sport performance

2

Analyzes the psychological variables impacting sports performance.

Effective comunication

3

Teaches essential communication skills to motivate and connect with athletes.

Conscious training

4

Integrates previous modules to promote conscious, effective training.

Giving inclusion a chance

5

Lays the foundation for creating a more inclusive sports environment.

How to use this Guide

Examples
Begin by reading the practical example provided. Try to recall a similar situation you've encountered or imagine how you might react if it happened to you.

Key Ideas
Reflect on these takeaways, as they're intended to be concise reminders of the chapter's essential messages.

Development
Focus on the main ideas here, which explain the core principles of the chapter. Consider how these concepts can relate directly to your coaching style and athlete interactions, and think about specific ways to incorporate them into your training sessions.
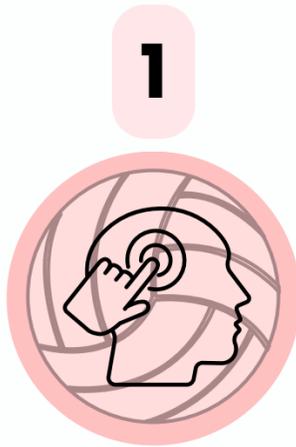
Tasks to do
Each chapter ends with actionable tasks that you can use during training or competitions. Applying these in real-time allows you to observe the effects on your athletes and fine-tune your methods based on what works best.

Contents

PSYCOACH

M1

Understanding the athlet

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Pablo is 17 years old and has been playing volleyball since he was 8. Since the start of the season, he has noticed a decrease in his motivation to train. He feels that something is off but can't identify what it is. He would like to discuss this with his coach but is unsure how she will react.
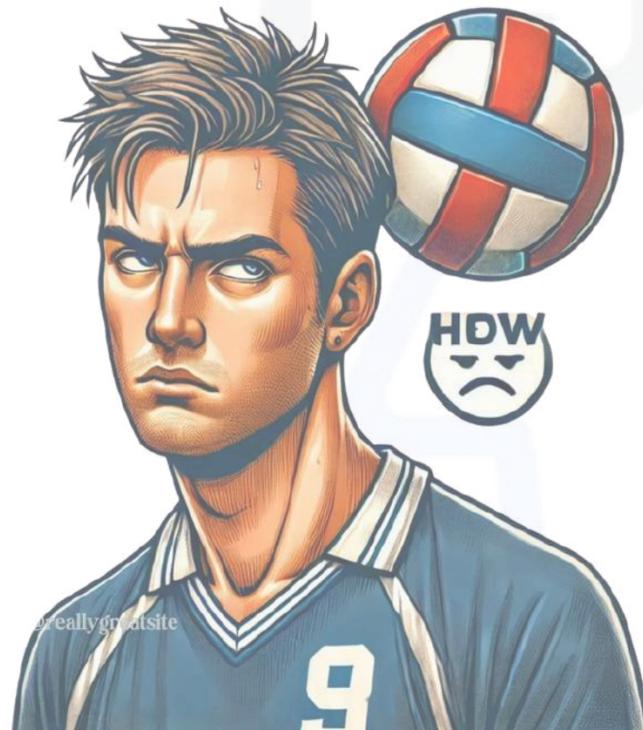
Introduction:

Sports psychology is the branch of psychology that studies human behavior in the sports context. Behavior includes both public/observable actions (what we do) and private/non-observable aspects (our thoughts and emotions). As sports psychologists, we work on the brain as another muscle, training emotions, thoughts, and attitudes to align athletes with their goals. Understanding our athletes means comprehending an athlete's behavior, how a person "functions" in both sports and personal realms, and the factors or variables that modulate this behavior. This essential aspect for sports performance is what we, as sports psychologists, focus on: human behavior. We often talk about an athlete's "attitude" or "mindset," but... do we really know what we are referring to?

Objective:

- Understand the athlete's internal world.
- Adapt training to the athlete's internal factors.
- Promote effective coach-athlete communication

Key words

#ATTITUDE

#BELIEFS

#EMOTIONS

#BEHAVIOR

In the world of sports, we often hear: "this player/team did not have a good attitude during the game," "they lacked attitude"… When we talk about attitude, it's important to understand that we're referring to having the willingness, eagerness, and desire for something; that desire and eagerness lead to being attentive, involved, committed, striving and working to achieve individual and group objectives.

- Think of a well-known athlete who usually has a good attitude **in what way?**
- Think of a teammate with a bad attitude **Why?**
- Think about yourselves when you have a good attitude **What is it like?**

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04

1.1: What is this about attitude?

Aptitude refers to the natural or developed skills that a player possesses.
Example: A player with a natural ability to deliver precise serves consistently, or who excels in setting due to years of dedicated practice, shows strong volleyball aptitude.

Attitude is the player's mental approach to challenges and competition. It can be perceived through determined behaviors
Example: A player who arrives early for practice, eager to improve, and maintains a positive mindset even after losses, exemplifies a strong, growth-oriented attitude in volleyball.

Attitude is formed through the interaction of three essential elements: **our way of thinking, how we feel, and how we behave**
.
For example, if Pablo feels uncomfortable in training, we are talking about... correct, his emotional reaction; when Pablo performs spike drills, that would be... okay, his behavior; and when Pablo thinks 'another terrible practice,' that is his... exactly, his way of thinking

Components of attitude

COGNITIVE
Knowledge and beliefs
ex.: Training keeps me fit

Triadic model

Training attitude

AFFECTIVE
feelings and emotions
ex.: the enjoy of training

BEHAVIOURAL
intended behaviors
ex.: complete 5 shooting rounds
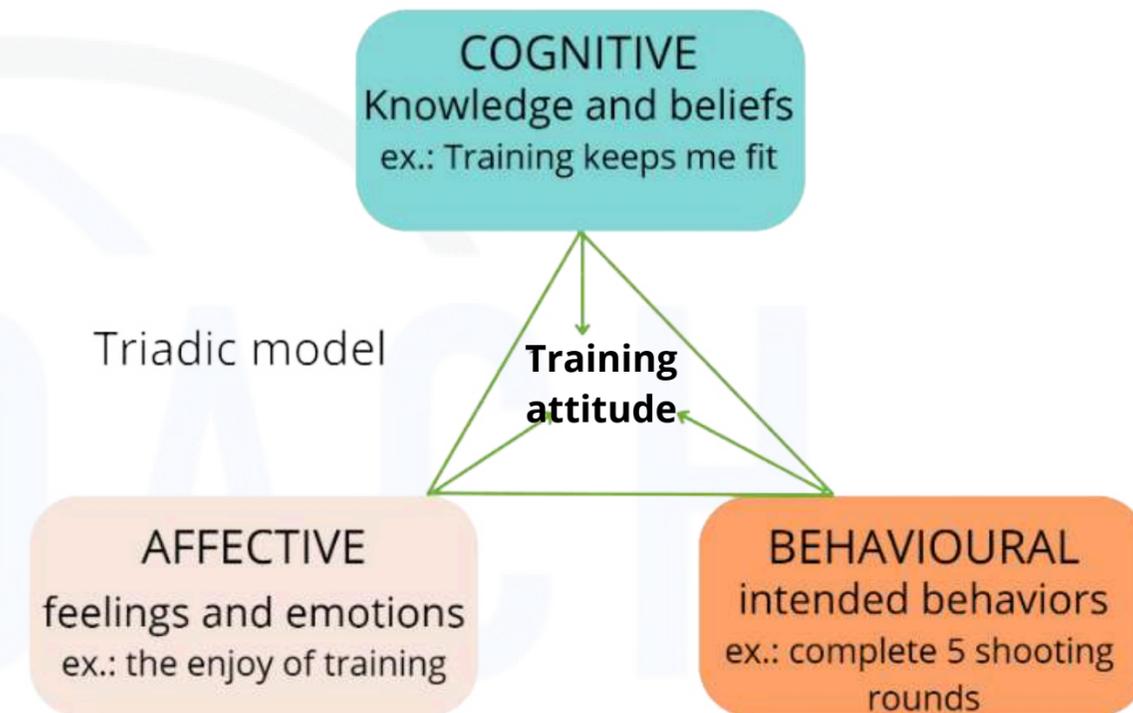
Try to identify the cognitive, emotional and behavioural variables:
❑ Joan feels very uncomfortable on the court.
❑ Joan plans and performs series and repetitions of a technical gesture.
❑ Joan: "I'm playing a bad game again".

1.1: What is this about attitude?
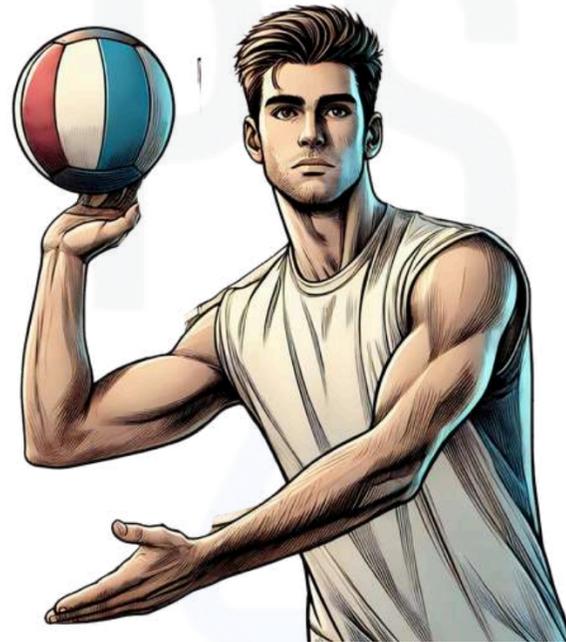
Let's imagine Pablo starts training thinking that nothing will go well today, what emotion do you think this generates?.... think about it, how do you think he will feel?....... okay, and feeling that way, how do you think he will behave?........ what actions is he likely to take or avoid?........

Now, let's imagine Pablo, despite arriving a bit unmotivated, thinks: 'Come on, Pablo, step by step, you know how to do it well,' what emotion will that thought generate?........ how do you think he will behave? If you notice, in the same situation, going to training, depending on how he thinks, he can change the way he acts.

- **Our beliefs** are formed through past experiences and by what we have learned from others. What we know and believe about the object.
- **Our emotional reactions** depend on past experiences and on learned responses to certain stimuli. How we feel about the object.
- **Our behaviour** is not always consistent with our attitude. How we respond to,or intend to respond to the object. E.g. we may believe that exercise is good for us and may enjoy participating, but we may not exercise very much. We are, however, more likely to behave in a way that reveals our attitude.

06

1.1: What is this about attitude?

What Aspects Build a Positive Attitude?

- Using helpful and functional thoughts.
- Practicing good emotional regulation.
- Setting clear goals.
- Building strong self-confidence.
- Cultivating social and team support.
- Developing resilience and adaptability.
- Demonstrating commitment and responsibility.
- Establishing a habit of reflection and continuous learning.
- Implementing effective time management.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
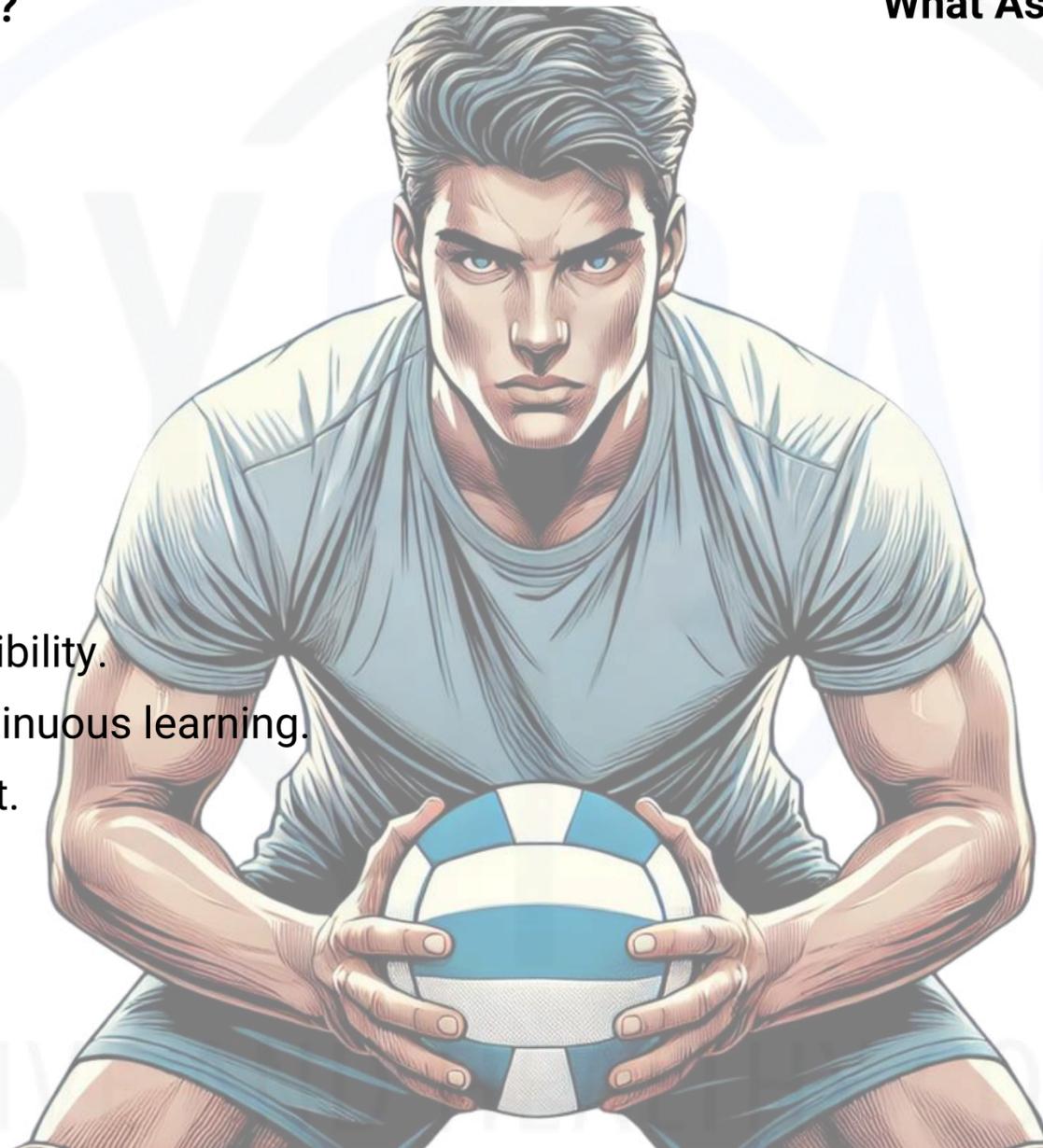
What Aspects Can Generate a Negative Attitude?

- Lack of confidence
- Injury / Fear of injury
- Lack of ability
- Suffering stress when participating
- Fear of failure
- Influence of negative role models
- Lack of support from family or friends
- Prejudices and stereotypes
- Poor communication from the coach
- Negative team dynamics

1.1: What is this about attitude?

Situation	Problematic Behavior	Coach's Action
1. Morning practice, visible fatigue	Lack of confidence: Pablo appears insecure and avoids making decisions in the game.	The coach works with Pablo to identify and use functional thoughts, reinforcing his skills with positive feedback.
2. Important match, intense pressure	Fear of failure: Pablo plays with fear, avoiding risks and playing conservatively.	The coach encourages Pablo to focus on task-based goals, reminding him that the process is more important than the outcome.
3. Returning from an injury	Fear of injury: Pablo is hesitant to fully engage in jumps and physical efforts.	The coach implements a gradual recovery program, ensuring Pablo regains physical and mental confidence gradually.
4. Personal issues outside of sports	Stress when participating: Pablo gets easily distracted and shows frustration during play.	The coach conducts a "check-in" with Pablo, exploring his emotional well-being and suggesting emotional regulation strategies.

1.1: What is this about attitude?

To ensure that athletes have an attitude associated with the values we aim to represent on the field, it is essential:

- That players understand the specific objective of the session/game.
- That they have and gain positive experiences from the session.
- That they recognize any negative behavior or attitude and work on it.

- Observe your players during practice, noting positive and negative behaviors (e.g., confidence, hesitation).
- Document specific actions and patterns you see, focusing on context and frequency.
- Reflect on possible causes, such as external pressures or lack of confidence.
- Act: Have brief one-on-one talks to reinforce good behaviors and gently address concerns.
- Follow-Up: Monitor changes in behavior and adjust your coaching strategies as needed.

Pablo's coach has noticed that his commitment to the team has dropped lately, and during practice, he constantly complains that nothing is working out for him."

Introduction:

Understanding and perceiving athletes is a fundamental skill for any coach who wishes to maximize the potential of their team. Each athlete has their own uniqueness, strengths, weaknesses, and goals. Understanding what drives them, their passions, and how they react to challenges is essential. . As a coach, you should guide the athlete's growth, not only in sports but also as an individual and person.

We focus on understanding the underlying reasons behind individuals' behavior, particularly in a sporting context. It likely explores psychological concepts and theories that explain human behavior, decision-making processes, and how various internal and external factors influence actions and reactions in sports scenarios. This chapter would be pivotal in providing insight into the mental aspects of sports performance and athlete management.

11

Objective:

- Understand and take into account the factors and variables that shape the way we respond to different situations during training and competition, and outside the sports context.

## Key words

#BEHAVIOR

#COMMUNICATION

#PERSONALITY

If we want to understand how we function as individuals, we must start by working in the present, while recognizing that this "present self" has been shaped by a personal evolution up until this moment.

1. **Genetic Influence:** Our genetic makeup plays a role in shaping our personality, such as being more introverted or extroverted. For example, someone may be naturally inclined to be more reserved in social situations, while another may feel comfortable being outgoing and social from an early age.

1. **Family Influence:** Our early relationships and experiences within the family have a significant impact. For example, Pablo shows a lot of insecurity due to a rigid family environment where mistakes were often punished. This has shaped his current behaviors and attitudes toward failure and pressure.
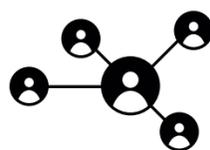
1. **Influence of Social Relationships:** As we grow, our interactions with friends, school, and partners begin to form new learning experiences. These relationships play a key role in how we react to life's challenges. For instance, Pablo finds it difficult to express his problems because he has built the belief that "people will never understand me," based on negative social experiences.

1.2- Understandig our behavior

While these influences are important, they are not the final determinant of a person's behavior. What truly matters is the choices we make in each moment, in the present. This is where coaches can play a crucial role in helping athletes respond more effectively to situations that arise in training or competition, fostering positive changes in both behavior and attitude. By guiding athletes through present challenges, we can support them in breaking away from unhelpful patterns and adopting more constructive approach

COMMUNICATION   © Psicosport

ENVIRONMENT CONTEXT

BEHAVIOUR

WHO AM I?   Personality, beliefs, values, strenghts.

WHAT I WANT?   Motivation, goals, attitude, interests.

HOW AM I?   Emotions, feelings, sensations

WHAT CAN I DO?   Skills, resources.

ME NOW

WHAT DO
WHAT I THINK
WHAT I FEEL

13
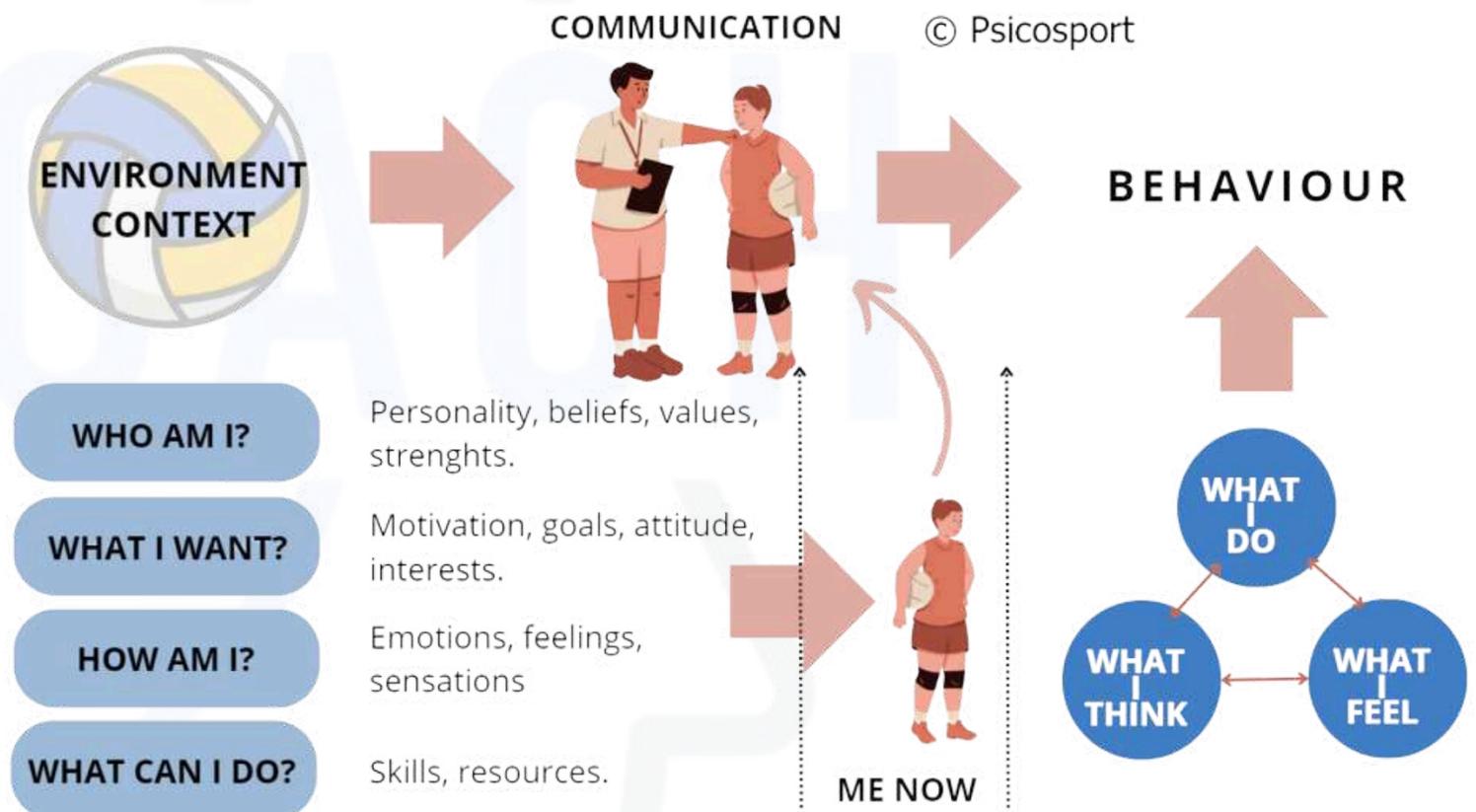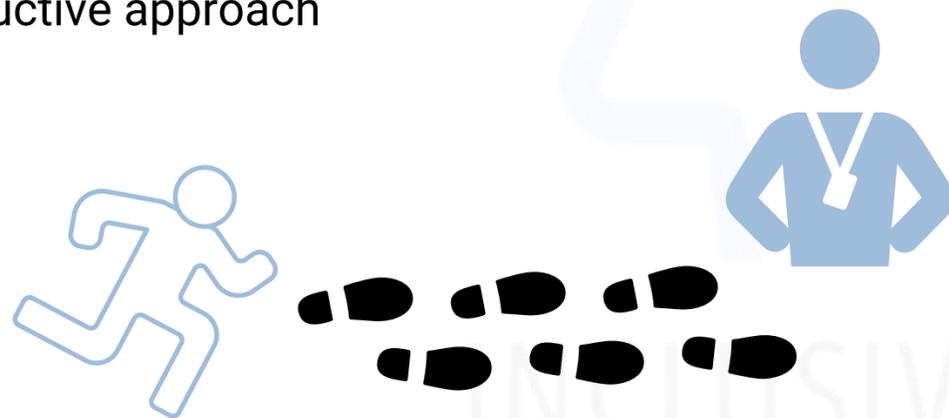
Pablo, despite his technical skills, his performance has significantly declined in recent weeks. He often appears frustrated on the court and struggles to maintain his focus during matches.

Through conversations, Pablo's coach realized that he held several erroneous beliefs about his abilities, particularly under pressure. These beliefs, shaped by past experiences, were fueling his insecurity and affecting his confidence on the court. For example, Pablo believed that every mistake he made was a sign that he was failing, rather than an opportunity to learn.

The coach decided to work with Pablo to identify and challenge these negative beliefs, replacing them with more functional and constructive ones. Using techniques from efffective comunication and guided visualization exercises, Pablo gradually began to shift his mindset. He started to see mistakes as learning opportunities rather than failures and began to approach games with a more positive and growth-oriented attitude.
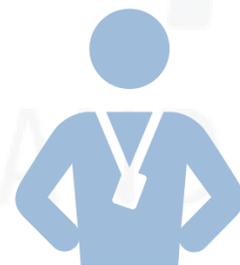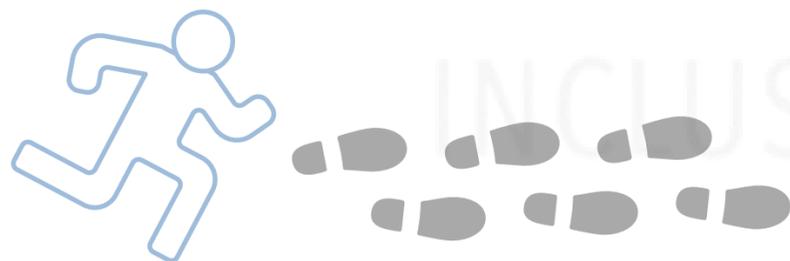
- Current behavior is influenced by genetics, family, and social relationships, but these factors do not completely determine it.

- Social relationships shape beliefs that influence how athletes face challenges. Negative beliefs, such as "people will never understand me," can limit performance.

- Coaches can help change these negative beliefs by guiding athletes to respond more effectively under pressure, using effective communication techniques and emotional support.

- The focus is on the present: what matters most is how the athlete reacts in the current moment, and this is where the coach plays a key role in fostering positive behaviors and attitudes.

14

1.2- Understandig our behavior

- **Use effective communication** to challenge limiting beliefs: Help players express their concerns and use open-ended questions to explore their thoughts.

Example: Ask Pablo, "How do you think we can work together to improve your confidence during matches?"

- **Adapt training based on emotional state:** Observe players' emotional states and adjust the training intensity accordingly.

Example: If Pablo is anxious before an important match, focus on relaxed technical drills instead of high-pressure situations.

"Perspective circle" sessions: Create group sessions where each athlete shares a personal challenge or goal and asks other team members to offer different perspectives or solutions. This encourages collaboration, empathy, and creativity in facing individual challenges.

15

1.2- Understandig our behavior

What do we observe?

Environmental trigger → Behaviour Motor/verbal Physiological reactions → Environmental impacts

What do we infer?

Attention
Perception
Emotion
Motivation
Thoughts
Decisions
Physiological reactions
Personality
Values
Beliefs
Learnings

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M1.3

Athlete's context matters

Understanding the athlet

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Pablo's coach has successfully helped him gain the confidence to talk about his struggles. Through their conversations, Pablo reveals that, aside from his difficulties on the court, he is feeling overwhelmed by the pressure of balancing his studies at the institute with volleyball. The demands of schoolwork, combined with training, are leaving him mentally drained and unable to focus during practice.

Introduction:

In sports performance, as a coach, you must also consider **the context** in which the sport and the athlete develop. The sports context influences the athlete's performance and well-being, both in their sports life and their social and private life. Therefore, it's important to consider how the environment where a sport is practiced impacts motivation, self-confidence, pressure, well-being, and ultimately, the athlete's performance.

These are important factors that you as a coach must develop, to understand the athlete and their well-being inside and outside the sports realm. Stress and burnout are common consequences of competitive demands and the athlete's environment; your support as a coach is essential.

18

Objective:

- Understand the importance of an athlete's personal context in their performance: Coaches will learn to recognize how factors such as family, academics, and social life influence a player's behavior and performance in training and competition.

Key words

#CONTEXT

#FAMILY

#SOCIAL

#LIFESTYLE
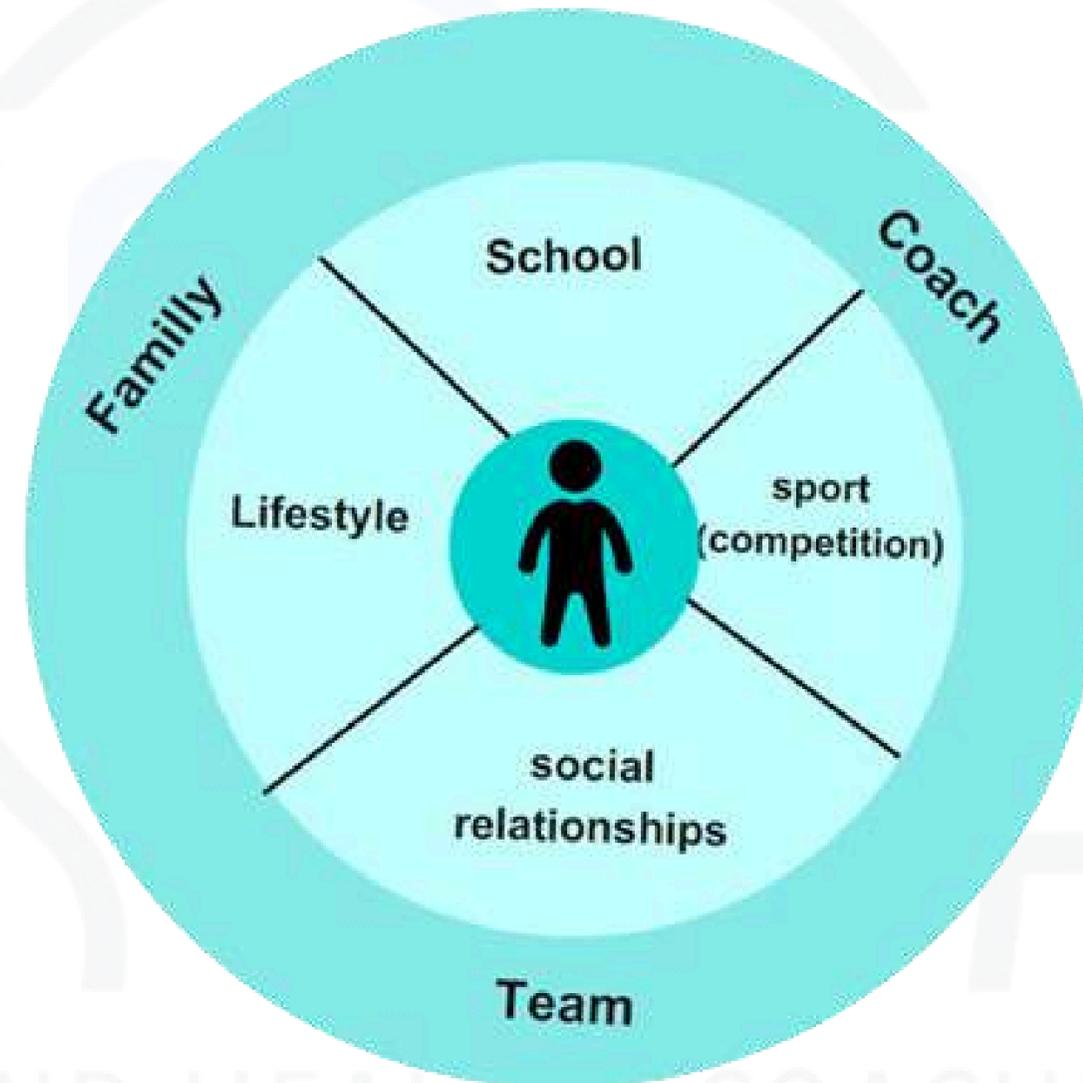
AREAS OF INFLUENCE ON THE ATHLETE (PSICOSPORT, 2012)

1.3- Athlete's context matters

TOWARDS A LEARNING MODEL, (ADAPTED FROM LLOPIS, 2018)
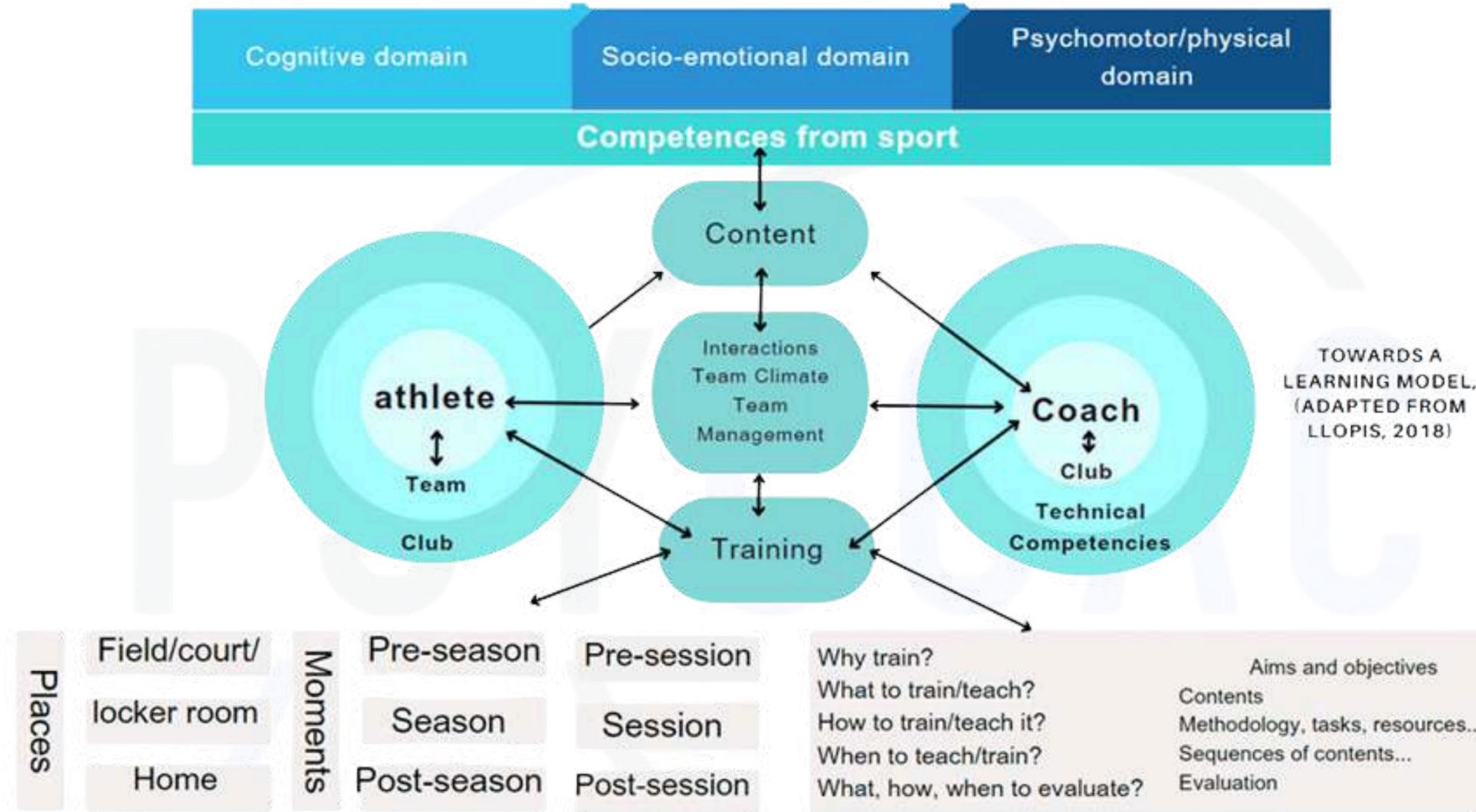
It is important for the coach to focus not only on technical (psychomotor) skills but also on the cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of the athlete. The athlete's personal context, such as their family, academic, and social environment, affects their emotional state, concentration, and motivation. By understanding this context, the coach can adapt training sessions and provide more effective support, improving both the athlete's performance and overall well-being.

1.3- Athlete's context matters

Family
Family has a significant influence on how athletes engage with sports. The way parents or family members support or pressure them can directly impact their confidence and performance.
If parents attend games and cheer positively from the stands, it can boost the athlete's motivation and confidence. On the other hand, if they criticize or place excessive pressure at home, it can create stress or fear of failure.

Academic/work Environment
Academic responsibilities and school life can affect the athlete's concentration and energy. Study schedules, exams, and academic expectations can be stressors.
An athlete who has a week full of exams may feel mentally exhausted and underperform in training or competitions. In such cases, the coach can adjust the training load to avoid overburdening the athlete.

Friendships and Social Relationships
Relationships with friends and peers influence the athlete's emotional state and how they handle pressure. Having a strong social support network can be a positive reinforcement, while social conflicts can create insecurities.
If an athlete has friends who support them and share their passion for sports, they are more likely to maintain a positive attitude. Conversely, if they experience social conflicts or bullying, it can damage their self-esteem and affect their performance.

21

1.3- Athlete's context matters

Social Expectations

Expectations from teammates, the club, and coaches also have an impact. The pressure to meet or exceed these expectations can generate both motivation and anxiety.

An athlete who feels the pressure to meet the expectation of being the best player on the team may experience anxiety before games, which can negatively affect performance. If the coach is aware of this, they can help reduce the pressure by focusing on the process, not just the outcome.

Sports Culture and Environment

The club or sports environment plays a role in how the athlete perceives their place in the team and their motivation to compete. A positive and collaborative environment fosters development, while a highly competitive or toxic environment can lead to burnout.

In a club where the team values cooperation and individual growth, a player will feel more comfortable learning and improving. However, in a highly competitive environment where only winning is rewarded, the athlete may lose motivation if they don't achieve the expected results.

Media and Social Networks

Social pressure and expectations also come from media and social networks. Athletes, especially young ones, are constantly exposed to comments, comparisons, and public expectations.

Pablo might feel demotivated when comparing himself to other athletes his age on social media, where achievements are often idealized. Negative comments on platforms like Instagram or Twitter can also affect his self-esteem and confidence. The coach must be aware of this impact and help Pablo manage the influence of media and social networks in a constructive way.

22

1.3- Athlete's context matters

Imagine that the athlete scores each variable from 0 to 5, reflecting their satisfaction in each area. The left wheel represents variables related to their sports context (e.g., technique, tactics, relationship with the coach), while the right wheel focuses on external context variables (e.g., academic/work responsibilities, family, social media). This exercise helps the athlete and coach identify areas that need more attention to improve both overall well-being and performance.

23
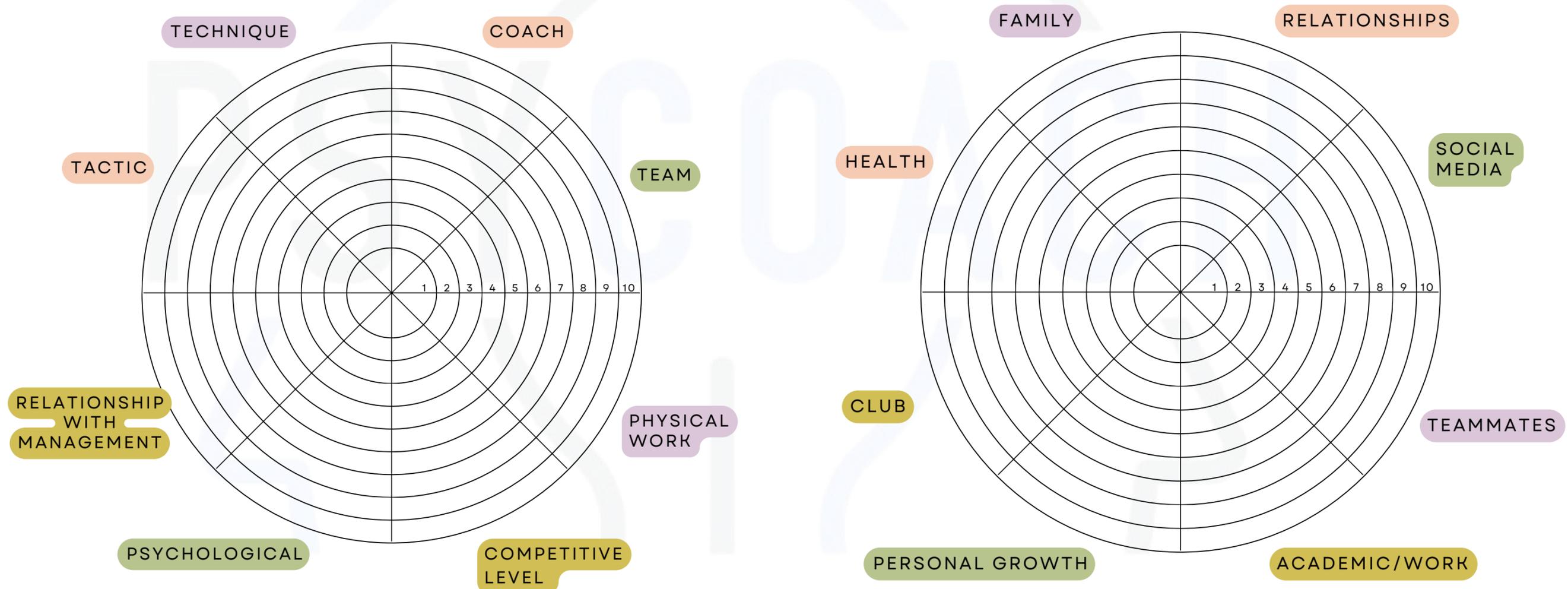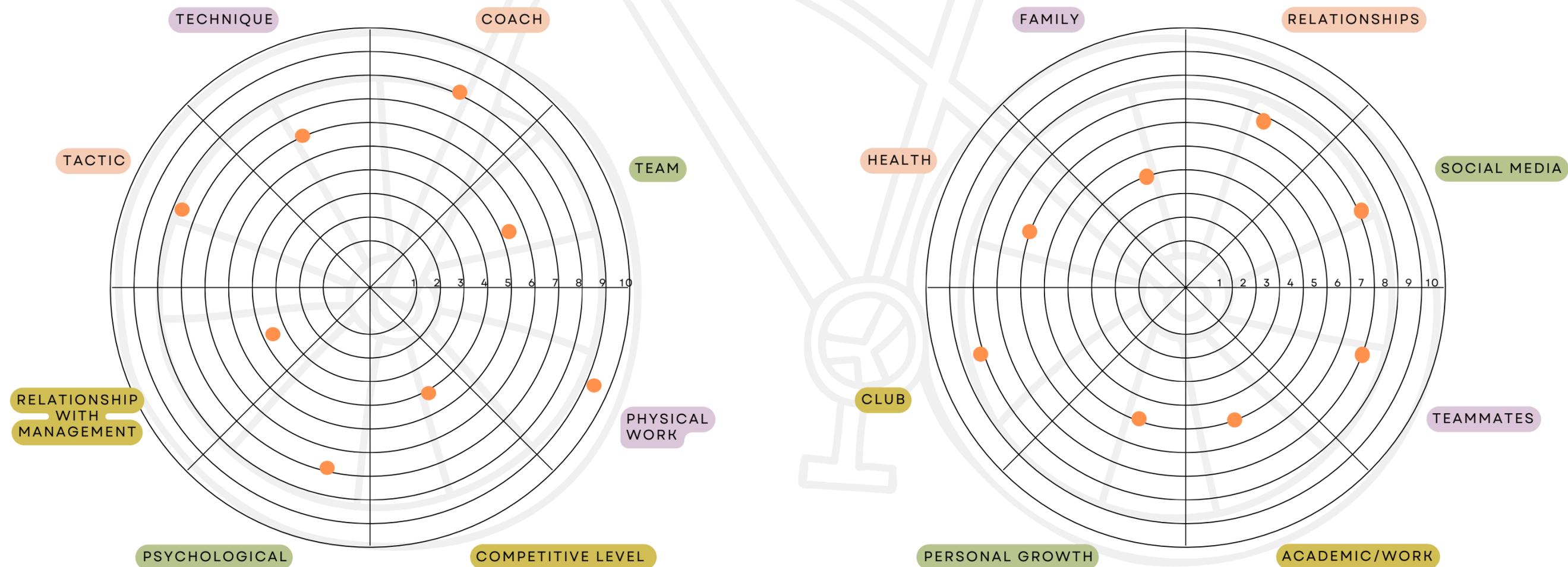
Now imagine that these two wheels represent the wheels of the bicycle that drives our life. One wheel represents the sports context and the other the personal context. Both wheels must work together—if one context is not functioning well, it's hard for the other to perform properly. The goal is not to score highly in every area but to ensure that all areas are being worked on and balanced. Like a bicycle, both wheels need to be aligned for the athlete to move forward effectively.

1.3- Athlete's context matters

Pablo's coach reviews his scores and notices low ratings in academics and relationships. She asks, *"Pablo, how do your studies and friendships affect your training?"*

Pablo replies, "I've been overwhelmed with school and haven't had time for friends. It's hard to focus during practice."

The coach responds, "What could help you balance both better?"
Pablo suggests, "I could plan study time more efficiently and make time for friends."

"Great idea," the coach says. "Let's try that and see how it improves your focus in training."

- Context matters: Both the athlete's personal and sports contexts are crucial for their overall well-being and performance. A balanced approach ensures that one context doesn't negatively affect the other.

- Holistic coaching: The coach must look beyond technical skills, understanding external factors such as academics, work, and relationships that influence the athlete's mental and physical state.

- Personalized support: By recognizing individual challenges in both contexts, the coach can provide tailored support, promoting a healthier balance between the athlete's personal life and sports commitments.

25

1.3- Athlete's context matters

- Regular check-ins: Schedule regular one-on-one conversations with the athlete to discuss not only their performance but also how their personal life (school, work, relationships) is affecting their well-being and focus.
- Adapt training plans: Adjust the training intensity or schedule based on the athlete's external commitments (e.g., exams, work deadlines), ensuring they have time to recover both mentally and physically.
- Encourage balance: Help athletes create routines that balance their academic/work life, social life, and sports commitments, emphasizing time management and stress reduction techniques.
- Promote open communication: Foster a team culture where athletes feel comfortable discussing personal challenges. This helps the coach offer support and adapt strategies accordingly.

26

M1.4

Personal and group goals

Understanding the athlet

His coach was able to identify that Pablo was struggling with his performance and motivation due to the pressure in training and competitions. After several conversations, they realized that both his personal and sports contexts were affecting his well-being. They decided to set individual goals for Pablo to work on breathing techniques and concentration during key moments of games, as well as improving his communication under pressure.

Introduction:

As a coach, one of your tasks is to help your athletes set clear and realistic goals. This is a fundamental part of their development in sports, as establishing specific and achievable objectives provides direction and motivation. Athletes seek realistic and specific goals. Their aim is to develop skills, mindset, and endurance. They strive to reach their peak performance, viewing obstacles as opportunities for learning.

Objective:

- Help athletes set both individual and team goals to enhance their motivation, performance, and overall well-being.
- Promote resilience and frustration management by linking goal-setting with the ability to overcome challenges in both sports and personal life.
- Create a balance between personal and team goals, ensuring that both contribute to the team's success and the athlete's personal development.

Key words

#GOALS

#SELF-DETERMINATION

#MOTIVATION

#SELF-EFFICACY
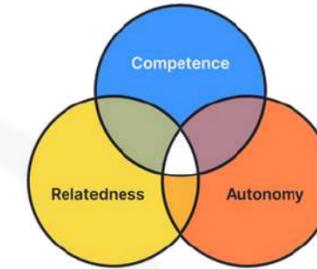
From the perspective of **self-determination theory,** goal setting enhances motivation and frustration management by fulfilling three basic psychological needs:

1. **Autonomy:** Allowing athletes to set their own goals gives them control over their development, increasing intrinsic motivation and reducing frustration, as they feel responsible for their progress.
2. **Competence:** Clear goals strengthen the sense of competence, as athletes can track their progress and improve skills, helping them better manage challenges and frustration.
3. **Relatedness:** Working towards both individual and team goals reinforces a sense of belonging, promoting collaboration and providing emotional support during difficult moments.

29

Setting Goals with the Player

1 **Evaluate the athlete's current situation**
- The coach should start by assessing the athlete's current state in the four key areas: technique, tactics, physical, and psychological. This provides a clear foundation for defining goals.

2 **Set long-term, medium-term, and short-term goals**
Together with the athlete, the coach should establish goals across three time frames:
- Long-term: What does the athlete want to achieve over an extended period, such as a season or a year?
- Medium-term: What intermediate goals need to be reached to make progress toward the long-term goal?
- Short-term: What immediate steps should the athlete take to start seeing progress in the coming weeks or training sessions?

3 **Differentiate between types of goals**
- Outcome-based goals: These focus on what the athlete wants to achieve, such as improving competition performance or breaking a personal record.

- Execution-based goals: Here, the coach and athlete identify what needs to be done to achieve those results, such as improving a volleyball serve technique.
- Task-based goals: Finally, break the goals down into specific, measurable, and assessable tasks that will guide progress in areas such as technique, tactics, physical conditioning...

4 **Create a measurable action plan**
- The coach should help the athlete make each goal specific, measurable, and achievable. For example, instead of a vague goal like "improve technique," the goal should be detailed, identifying which specific technique to improve and how progress will be measured.

5 **Regularly review and adjust progress**
- As the athlete progresses, the coach should regularly review the short, medium, and long-term goals. This ensures the athlete stays on track and allows for adjustments to the goals if necessary.

6 **Incorporate resilience and frustration management.**

30

1.4- Personal and group goals

GOALS	Outcome-based goals	Execution-based goals	Task-based goals
	What do we want to achieve?	What do we have to do to achieve it?	How will we do it? Specific, measurable, assessable
Long-Tern			Technique: Tactic: Physical: Psycho:
Medium-Term			Technique: Tactic: Physical: Psycho:
Short-Term			Technique: Tactic: Physical: Psycho:

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GOALS	Outcome-based goal	Execution-based goals	Task-based goals
Long-Term	Improve overall serve performance under pressure in competitive matches.		
Short-Term		**Technique**: Focus on improving serve consistency in training sessions.	**Technique**: Practice 50 serves per session, 3 times a week, aiming for 80% accuracy in the next month.
		Tactic: Make quick tactical decisions during key game moments.	**Tactic**: Simulate game-like serve scenarios during training with varying pressure levels.
		Physical: Increase stamina to maintain high serve performance late in the game.	**Physical**: Add 20-minute endurance drills post-training, twice a week.
		Psycho: Reduce pre-serve anxiety through mental conditioning.	**Psycho**: Use visualization and breathing exercises before and during serves to stay calm and focused.

- Setting short-term goals linked to long-term objectives is essential for guiding the athlete's progress in a structured and measurable way. This helps maintain focus and motivation as athletes see concrete progress towards their final goal.
- Focusing on specific technical aspects (such as Pablo's serve) makes training more effective. Clear goals in technique, tactics, physical conditioning, and psychological development ensure comprehensive athlete growth.
- Self-determination theory emphasizes the importance of fulfilling the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Involving athletes in the goal-setting process strengthens their intrinsic motivation, helping them manage frustration better and grow both individually and as part of the team.

32

- **Set clear and achievable goals:**

Work with athletes to set short, medium, and long-term goals, focusing on key areas such as technique, tactics, physical conditioning, and psychological development.

- **Incorporate game simulation drills:**

Introduce realistic game situations during training that require athletes to make quick decisions under pressure. This helps improve their technical execution and tactical decision-making.

- **Develop mental preparation routines:**

Include breathing techniques, visualization, and focus exercises before games or training sessions. These routines will help athletes manage pressure and reduce anxiety, especially during high-performance situations.

- **Create space for self-assessment:**

Encourage athletes to evaluate their own progress. This fosters autonomy and strengthens their ability to make independent decisions, boosting intrinsic motivation.

- **Gradually increase challenges:**

Progressively raise the difficulty of drills and tasks. Start with simpler tasks and, as athletes improve, increase the complexity to develop resilience and their ability to handle challenges.

- **Regular goal reviews:**

Hold regular meetings to review progress on individual and team goals. This allows adjustments to the goals and also reinforces a sense of competence and connection with the team.
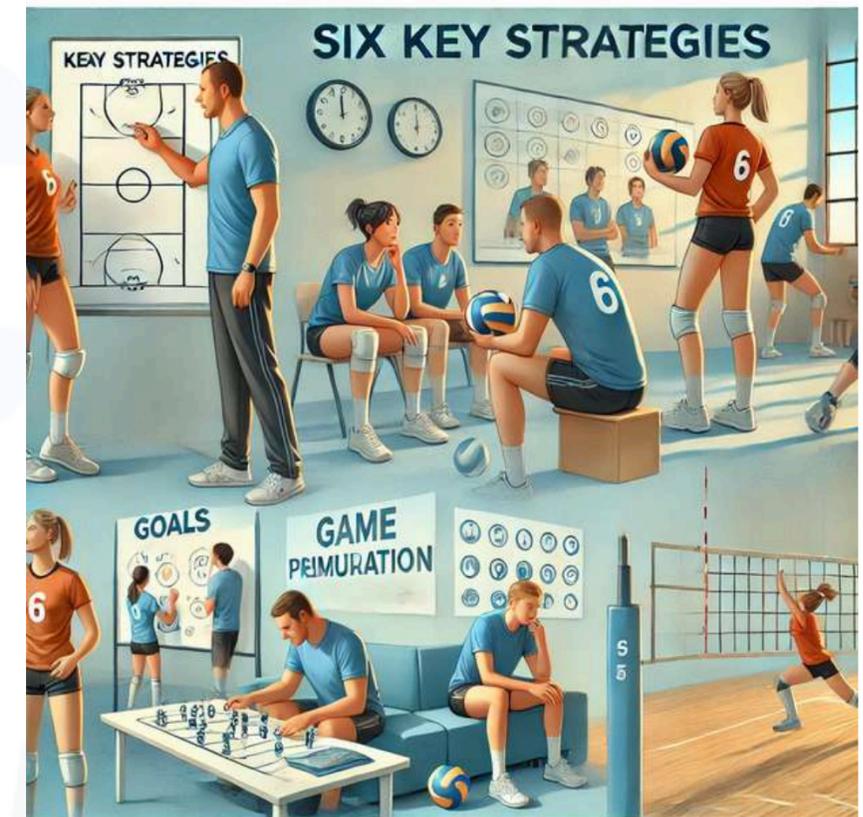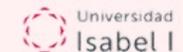
33

At the beginning of the season, the entire team was highly motivated and enthusiastic in every training session. As the months passed and due to recent results, Carlos notices his teammates missing more training sessions, giving all sorts of excuses.

Introduction:

This chapter addresses a crucial element for sports performance: personal values and strengths as fundamental tools, not only for success in sports but also for the personal growth of athletes. Values and strengths, when used correctly, become powerful instruments that can significantly enhance performance. However, the key lies in their transfer to concrete and consistent actions that give real meaning to these values and strengths.

35

1.5- Personal values and strengths

Objective:

- Understand the importance of personal values and strengths as tools for enhancing both sports performance and personal growth in athletes.
- Learn how to effectively transfer values and strengths into concrete actions that align with athletic goals, fostering consistency between personal principles and behavior in training and competition.
- Recognize the coach's role in modeling and reinforcing these values through daily interactions, decision-making, and goal setting, contributing to a culture of integrity and motivation within the team.

Key words

#VALUES

#STRENGTHS

#REINFORCE

#HABITS

- **Human values** are central psychological variables that guide our decisions, behaviors, and judgments. These values are essential in developing an athlete's character.

- **Character strengths** are positive traits that athletes possess, which can be developed through experience and training. In sports, developing these strengths is crucial to achieving optimal performance and fostering a growth mindset.

The Psicosport model of strengths and values:
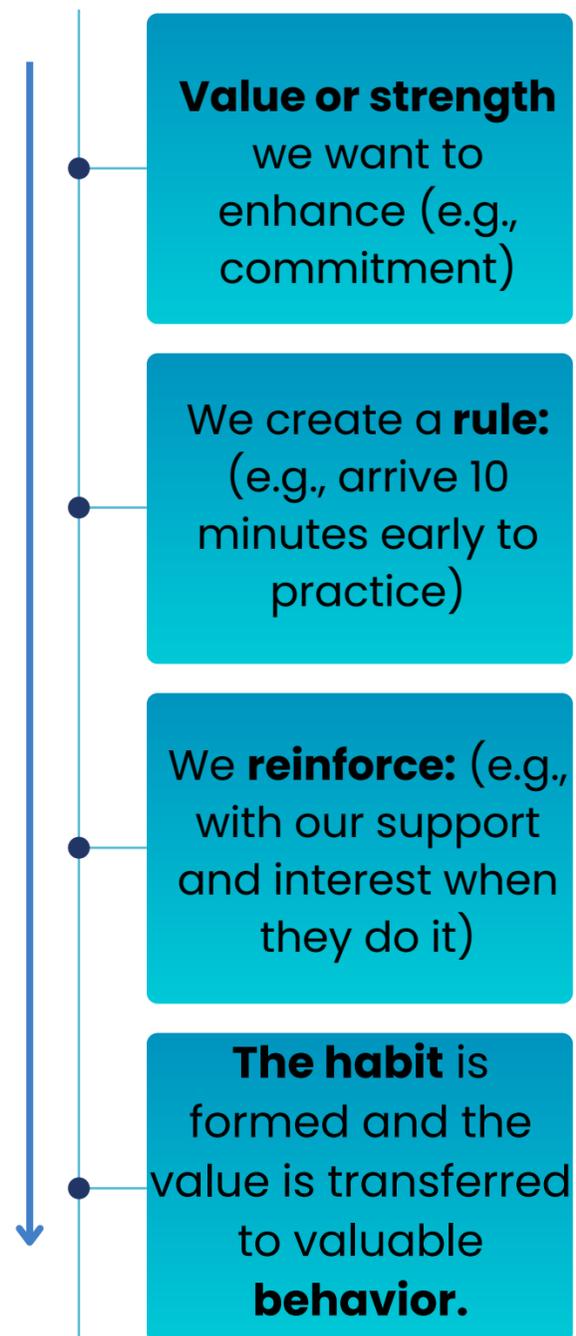The chapter introduces the Psicosport model which groups strengths into four main values:
1. **Personal growth (overcoming)**
2. **Cooperation**
3. **Respect**
4. **Effort**

Each value is associated with a set of strengths (creativity, curiosity, leadership, honesty, perseverance, etc.), which reflect both individual abilities and social interactions in the sports context.

36

Value or strength we want to enhance (e.g., commitment)

We create a **rule:** (e.g., arrive 10 minutes early to practice)

We **reinforce:** (e.g., with our support and interest when they do it)

The habit is formed and the value is transferred to valuable **behavior.**

Transfering strengths and values to sports performance

This is where the importance of using strengths and values as effective tools comes in. It is not enough to simply identify them; they must be transferred to concrete and coherent behaviors that reflect these principles. This process is achieved through:

- **Reflection and evaluation:** Coaches must help athletes reflect on their values and strengths, and how they relate to their behavior during training and competition.

- **Linking values to action**: Strengths and values must not remain theoretical. Athletes need to learn how to act consistently with their values. For example, actions in the game should align with principles like perseverance, respect, or leadership.

- **Applying values in competition**: This transfer occurs not only in the physical domain. For example, if an athlete values humility, they should show it by accepting constructive criticism from their coach, or if they value perseverance, they should demonstrate it by continuing to push through when results are not immediate.

37

Values & Strengths

ME TOWARDS MYSELF

- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Critical Thinking
- Self-Control
- Appreciation
- Gratitude
- Transcendence
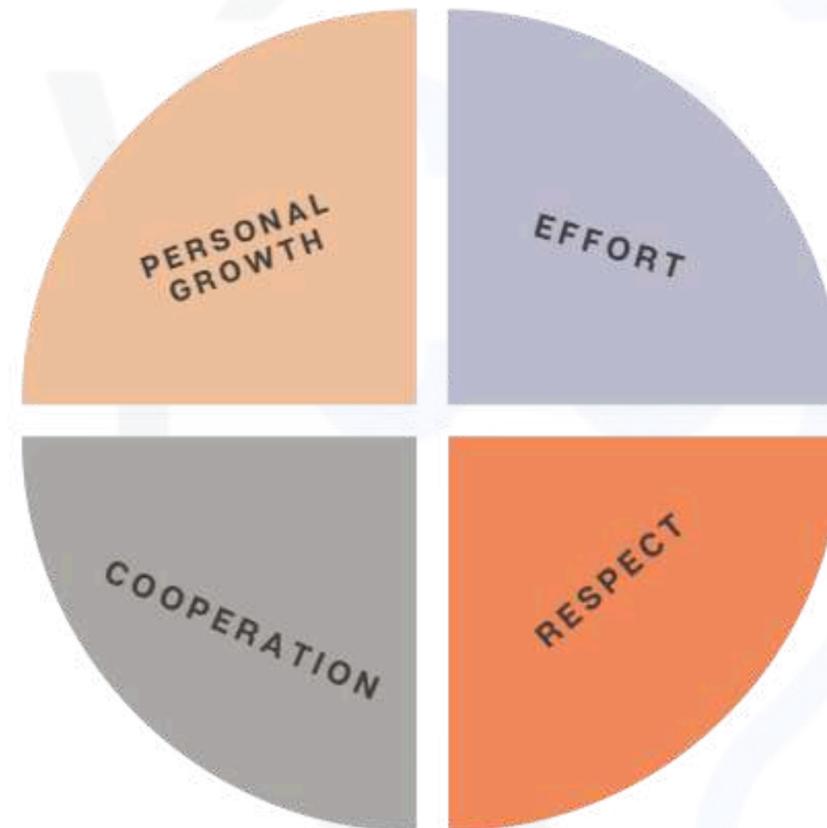
ME AND MY CHALLENGES

- Learning
- Courage
- Perseverance
- Vitality
- Optimism

ME WITH OTHERS

- Perspective
- Affectivity
- Generosity
- Empathy
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Humor

ME TOWARDS OTHERS

- Honesty
- Impartiality
- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Prudence

PERSONAL GROWTH

EFFORT

COOPERATION

RESPECT

PSICOSPORT ©

38

Generating performance values/strengths

Value or strength we want to enhance (e.g., commitment)

We create a **rule:** (e.g., arrive 10 minutes early to practice)

We **reinforce:** (e.g., with our support and interest when they do it)

The habit is formed and the value is transferred to valuable **behavior.**

Gather the team and ask the following question: **"What do we want to represent? What do we want our fans to see when we are competing?"**	
Write down the responses and identify the values and strengths that receive the most consensus	(e.g., fight, competitiveness, teamwork, commitment).
Translate these values and strengths into concrete behaviors	e.g., Fight: diving for the ball without hesitation).
Promote these behaviors in training and competition, and reinforce them when they appear by giving positive feedback and recognition.	
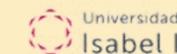
39

Sport performance

M-2

Team coached by Laura had a strong start to the season, but one of their key players, Ana, has started to struggle during important matches. Although Ana excels in training due to her solid technique, she seems to freeze during decisive games. Each mistake leaves her more frustrated, and her self-confidence decreases with each error.
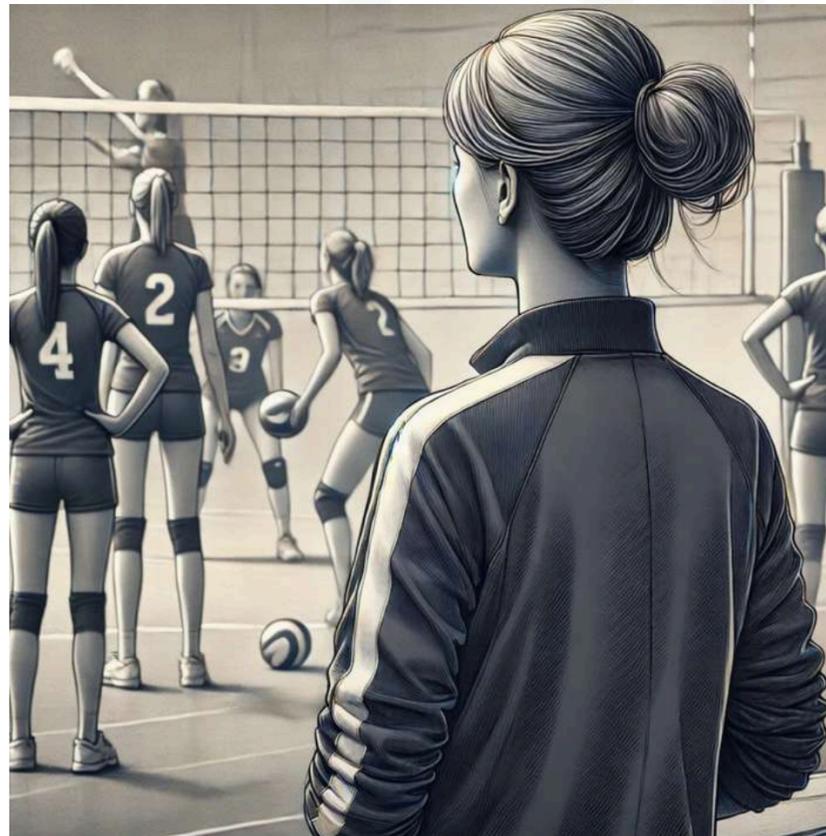
Introduction:

In the previous modul, we explored the foundations of behavior in sports. Now, we delve into the key psychological variables that influence sports performance. Self-confidence, motivation, and concentration are critical components that, together with personal values and strengths, define how an athlete approaches training and competition.

These variables not only impact physical performance but also affect the athlete's perception of well-being and satisfaction. In this chapter, we will identify the main psychological variables that influence performance and explore how coaches can act upon them to enhance both the athletic experience and the overall results.

Objective:

- Identify the main psychological variables that impact sports performance.
- Understand the relationship between mental and physical performance.
- Develop strategies to improve athletes' self-confidence, concentration, activation and motivation.

Key words

#Performance

#Self-confidence

#Concentration

technical staff   Player/team   Stand   Family

Self-confidence

Motivation	Cohesion	Stress
Attention /Focus	Activation	Physiological reactions
Decision making/planning		Execution

Sport Performance

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values and strengths
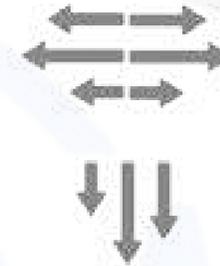
In this chapter, we will provide an overview of the main variables. In the following chapters, we will address them in a more specific way.

1. Self-Confidence:

- Self-confidence refers to the belief in one's ability to perform the necessary actions to achieve a specific goal. It's crucial that coaches help reinforce their athletes' confidence, as higher self-confidence leads athletes to take more risks and handle pressure with greater ease. This can be achieved through positive feedback and reinforcement during training sessions.

An adequate level of self-confidence allows athletes to focus on continuous improvement rather than playing to avoid failure.

- How often do you provide constructive feedback to your athletes?
- Do you actively celebrate their progress, no matter how small?
- How can you help athletes identify small victories that boost their self-confidence?

The coach identifies that the issue lies not in her technical ability, but in her self-confidence to execute the serve under pressure. During practice, the coach creates controlled game situations and provides specific feedback: "Marta, your toss is well aligned, now just focus on explosively transferring your weight forward." The coach also uses positive reinforcement, highlighting her improvement in synchronizing the jump with the hit, and how this affects the ball's velocity.

2. Motivation:

Motivation is the driving force that pushes athletes to pursue their goals. It can be intrinsic (driven by personal enjoyment and passion for the sport) or extrinsic (driven by external rewards like trophies or recognition). Identifying what motivates each player is key to personalizing motivational strategies.

Sara, one of the younger players on the volleyball team, shows great promise during training sessions but struggles with consistency. Her motivation is primarily extrinsic, relying on external praise and rewards to push herself. The coach realizes this and begins to shift her focus by helping Sara find internal motivation. By setting personal goals that align with her values (e.g., becoming a better team player), Sara gradually learns to find motivation within herself, allowing her to perform more consistently even without external rewards.

- How can you help each athlete find personal goals that resonate with them and keep them motivated long-term?
- How do you encourage them to focus on the game rather than just external rewards?

The coach recognizes that Sara's performance is tied too closely to outcome-based goals, such as winning or being recognized for her achievements. To address this, the coach begins by helping Sara shift her focus toward process goals—specific, actionable objectives that she can control and improve on during every practice and game.

- "Improve your defensive positioning by taking the first step quicker when reading the opponent's setter."

45

3. Concentration:

The ability to concentrate and stay focused during training and games is essential, especially during crucial moments of a match. Concentration can be affected by external distractions or internal pressures. Coaches can help their athletes improve focus through techniques like visualization or meditation.

Lucia is one of the most technically skilled players on the volleyball team. However, during high-pressure matches, she struggles with maintaining her concentration. Her focus tends to drift, especially during long rallies or crucial moments of the game, such as serving under pressure or reacting to fast-paced attacks. External distractions, like the crowd noise or the pressure of an important point, cause her to lose focus, which affects her decision-making and execution.

Reflection for the Coach:

- How can I create training environments that help athletes practice their concentration under real-game pressure?
- Am I aware of the specific moments when my players lose concentration?

The coach identifies that Lucia's problem stems from her inability to maintain attentional focus during key moments. To improve this, the coach introduces exercises designed to strengthen Lucia's ability to stay present and focused, even when external distractions arise.

The coach incorporates visualization techniques, asking Lucia to imagine herself in pressure situations during the match, fully focused on the ball and her movements. Before games, Lucia practices deep breathing exercises to calm her nerves and sharpen her concentration.

46

Activation Control:

or arousal regulation, refers to managing the level of physical and psychological energy an athlete brings to their performance. This variable is crucial because too much or too little activation can negatively impact performance. Finding the optimal level of activation is key for athletes to perform at their best, especially during high-pressure situations like competitions.

Laura, one of the team's middle blockers, tends to become overly aroused during high-pressure matches. This heightened arousal leads to nervousness and tension, affecting her timing on blocks and spikes. She often finds herself too anxious to execute her movements fluidly, resulting in missteps and rushed plays. On the other hand, during less important games or practices, Laura struggles with under-arousal, feeling sluggish and disengaged.

Reflection for the Coach:

- What tools can I introduce to help my players manage over- or under-arousal?
- Am I recognizing when my players are under-aroused or over-aroused during games?

The coach recognizes that Laura's issue is related to her ability to manage arousal levels, and she introduces techniques for activation control. First, they work on identifying Laura's optimal activation zone—where she is energized but not overly tense. For high-pressure matches, the coach teaches Laura deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation exercises to help lower her arousal levels. Before critical plays, Laura uses controlled breathing to calm her nerves and bring her focus back to the game.
For under-arousal during practice, the coach incorporates more dynamic warm-ups and motivational cues.

47

M2.1- Key psychological variables for performance

Team cohesion:

refers to the degree to which players in a team work together, trust each other, and feel united toward a common goal. In sports like volleyball, where team dynamics and communication are crucial, cohesion directly impacts performance. It is the "glue" that holds the team together, ensuring that players not only function well as individuals but as a collective unit

The women's volleyball team has been struggling with communication and trust after a series of losses. Players have become disconnected, often sticking to small groups during training, leaving others isolated. This lack of collaboration is affecting their on-court performance, with missed plays and a reluctance to support each other in crucial moments

Reflection for the Coach:

- How can I create an environment where every player feels included and valued?
- Am I encouraging open communication among teammates?
- How can I integrate off-court activities to improve team cohesion?

The coach understands that team cohesion is critical for both performance and the overall well-being of the players. To improve this, the coach implements specific strategies that focus on fostering unity, communication, and trust among the players.
The intervention consist of team-building activities, group tasks that require collaboration and team communication during defensive plays.

48

Resilience:

in sports refers to an athlete's ability to recover quickly from setbacks, adapt to challenging situations, and maintain a positive mindset under pressure. In volleyball, resilience is critical for dealing with losses, making errors, or facing a tough opponent. It's not just about bouncing back after adversity; it's also about using those experiences to grow and improve. Resilience helps athletes stay mentally strong and continue to push themselves, even when things don't go as planned.

Sofia, one of the team's outside hitters, tends to lose confidence after making mistakes during matches. For example, if she hits the ball out of bounds or gets blocked multiple times, her performance often drops for the rest of the game. She becomes visibly frustrated, which affects her focus and overall play. Her inability to recover mentally from these errors not only impacts her performance but also disrupts team dynamics.

Reflection for the Coach:
- How can I help my athletes reframe mistakes as opportunities for growth?

- What high-pressure scenarios can I create in practice to simulate adversity?

The coach recognizes that Sofia struggles with resilience, particularly in how she handles setbacks. To address this, the coach introduces a series of mental toughness drills that simulate high-pressure situations, like being down by several points. During these drills, Sofia is encouraged to focus on the next play rather than dwelling on past mistakes. The coach also introduces positive self-talk, helping Sofia reframe her thoughts after an error (e.g., "I'll get it right next time" instead of "I keep messing up").

49

M2.1- Key psychological variables for performance

Variable	Task	Description
Self-confidence	Daily positive reinforcement	Dedicate a moment in each practice to give specific positive feedback to each player, highlighting small improvements in technique or tactics.
Motivation	Set process goals	Help each player identify a process goal they can improve during the week (e.g., improving defensive positioning) and track their progress.
Concentration	Focused attention D drills	Introduce drills that require full concentration, such as serving with background noise or distractions, and observe how players maintain their focus.
Activation control	Activation regulation exercises	Teach players breathing and relaxation techniques before matches, and create a more energetic warm-up routine to boost activation levels.
Team cohesion	Peer Feedback Exercise	Organize a feedback session where each player gives constructive advice to another player, focusing on communication and collaboration during games.
Resilience	Simulate adverse situations	Create practice scenarios simulating tough situations (e.g., being down by several points), guiding players to stay focused and calm under pressure.

50

PSYCOACH

M2.2

Self-confidence

Sport performance

M-2

Marta, a player with great potential, has been struggling with the jump serve. Despite mastering the fundamentals, her lack of confidence leads to errors, such as inconsistent ball tosses or poor weight transfer during the jump, which affects the accuracy and power of her serve.

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, we explored how various psychological variables influence sports performance. Among these, self-confidence plays a crucial role. Self-confidence is often cited by athletes and coaches as a key factor influencing peak performance in sports. However, when asked to define or describe it, many athletes struggle to provide a clear explanation. In sports psychology, self-confidence refers to an athlete's belief in their ability to succeed in a given task or to achieve a specific goal. It's not simply about feeling good; it's about the conviction that one has the skills, resources, and mindset necessary to execute a particular action successfully.
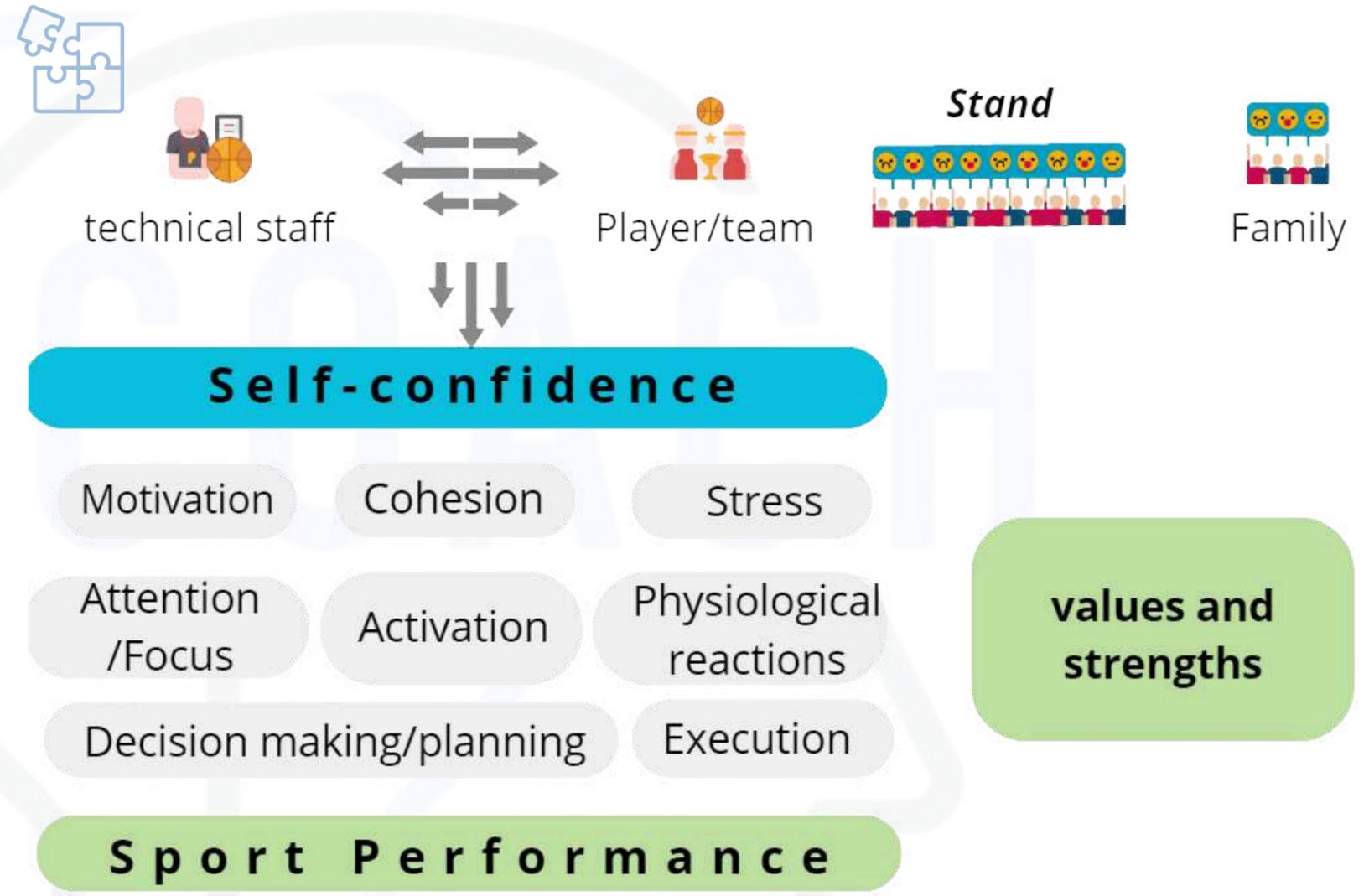
Objective:

- Analyze the relationship between self-confidence and sports performance.
- Identify strategies to build and maintain self-confidence in athletes.
- Understand the impact of self-confidence on team dynamics and performance.

Key words

#Performance

#Self-confidence

#Improving

technical staff

Player/team

Stand

Family

Self-confidence

| Motivation | Cohesion | Stress |

| Attention /Focus | Activation | Physiological reactions |

| Decision making/planning | Execution |

values and strengths

Sport Performance

In practice, we often encounter athletes with low levels of self-confidence, who underestimate their abilities or the resources available to them for success. These athletes may attribute their successes to external factors like luck, while consistently doubting their own abilities. On the other hand, athletes with excessive confidence may overestimate their skills, believing that they are destined for success, while ignoring or downplaying their weaknesses.

In both cases, the solution lies in helping athletes develop an objective and realistic evaluation of their strengths, weaknesses, and potential for success. By learning to assess their own abilities accurately, athletes can focus on improving where it matters most and approach their goals with genuine confidence rather than false optimism or pessimism.

Playing to Avoid Failure:

When athletes lack self-confidence, their primary concern often becomes avoiding mistakes rather than striving for progress. This results in playing cautiously, focusing on not failing rather than trying to succeed. For example, a volleyball player might hesitate to take risks like going for a difficult serve or aggressive spike, fearing they will make a mistake and disappoint their teammates or coach. This "fear of failure" mentality limits their growth, as they are not pushing themselves to their full potential or learning from difficult situations.

Practical strategies for developing self-confidence

1. **Analyze strengths and weaknesses**
Help athletes reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Encourage them to conduct a self-analysis, identifying the areas where they excel and where improvement is needed. This process should involve input from coaches and teammates to avoid personal bias, either underestimating or overestimating their abilities.

2. **Set achievable goals**
Create training and competition goals that are achievable in the short to medium term. By setting realistic goals, athletes can experience small successes, which boost their confidence in their abilities and maintain motivation.

3. **Train in uncomfortable situations**
Identify situations or technical gestures where an athlete's confidence wavers and focus on these areas during training. The more they practice in these scenarios, the more control they will gain over them, leading to improved execution and increased confidence.

4. **Develop a competition plan**
Having a clear plan for competitions reduces uncertainty and boosts confidence. By anticipating challenges and creating strategies to overcome them, athletes feel more prepared and in control, which positively impacts their self-confidence.

5. **Embrace mistakes**
Teach athletes to view mistakes as part of the learning process. Learning to live with errors and failures without allowing them to impact confidence is essential. Athletes must evaluate their performance based on execution, not just results.

6. **Constructive interpretation of reality**
Athletes must learn to interpret their reality constructively. The way they view their results, feedback from coaches, teammates, and even external factors like social media, can influence their confidence. Encourage them to filter this information positively, focusing on growth and improvement.

Plan sessions with the parents and families of your athletes to promote attitudes that help improve their children's self-confidence.

Guiding parents in supporting their children's development is essential for fostering a positive environment that encourages growth and resilience. Below are key strategies to help parents build their children's self-confidence throughout the competition process:

Before the competition:
- Motivate with a positive focus: Encourage to use phrases like, "Do your best and enjoy the process," to shift focus from winning to effort and personal growth.

During the competition:
- Encourage without pressure: Teach parents to support their children without showing frustration, using affirmations like, "Keep going!" to maintain a positive mindset.

After the competition:
- Praise effort over results: Guide parents to say, "I'm proud of your effort, you did well," reinforcing that success is in the effort, not just the outcome.
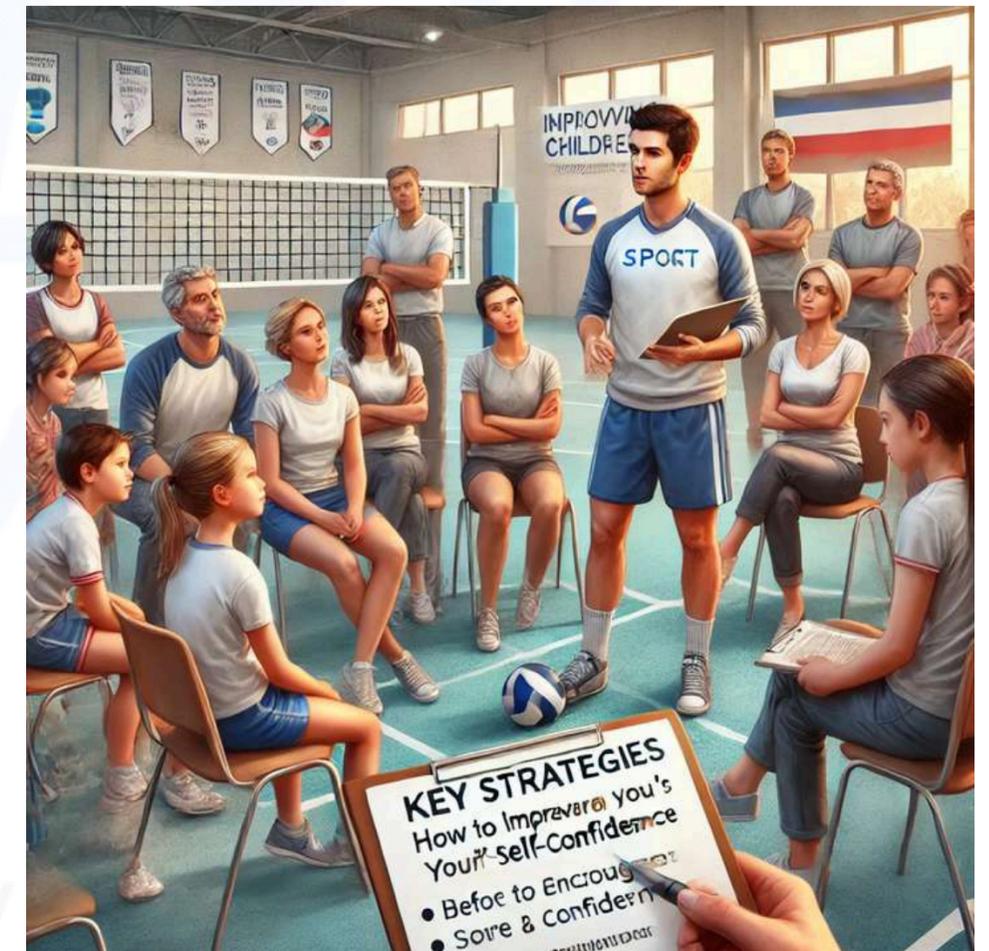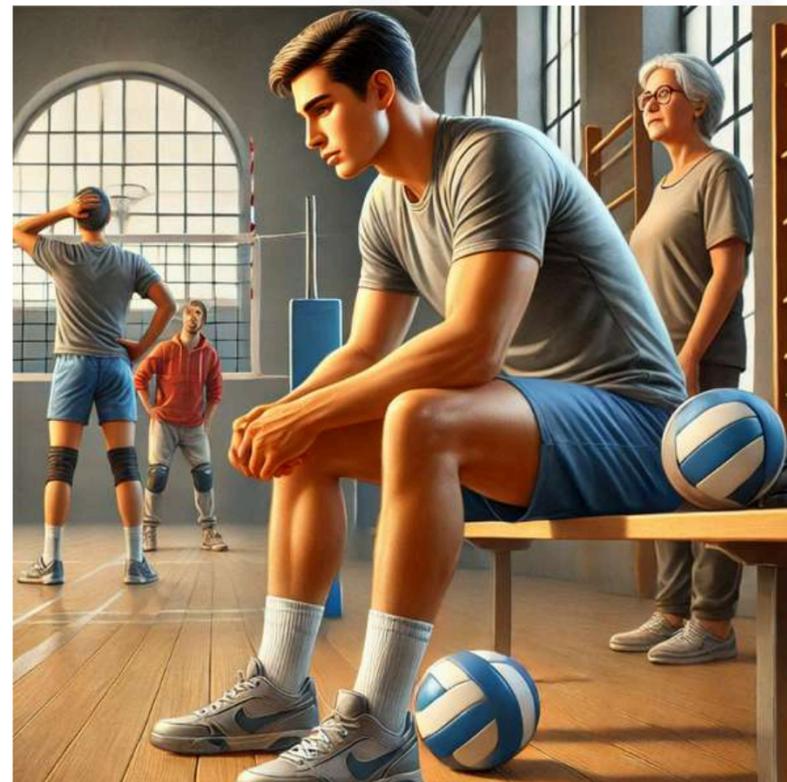
Pedro, a talented player, has been skipping training sessions for the past few months, making excuses to avoid practice. Moving from the junior to the senior category has been difficult for him, and he doesn't feel comfortable with his new team.

Introduction:

Motivation is closely tied to the athlete's sense of need. When athletes perceive that their environment satisfies their core needs —such as relationship, competence, and autonomy—they are more likely to feel motivated. In sports, understanding and leveraging motivation are key to fostering both performance and well-being.

It's important to connect motivation with need. What need are athletes trying to fulfill through sports practice? Is it the need to socialize, to improve, to compete, or to feel good physically and mentally? If we can understand what drives our players, we can maintain and even increase their motivation and commitment to the sport.
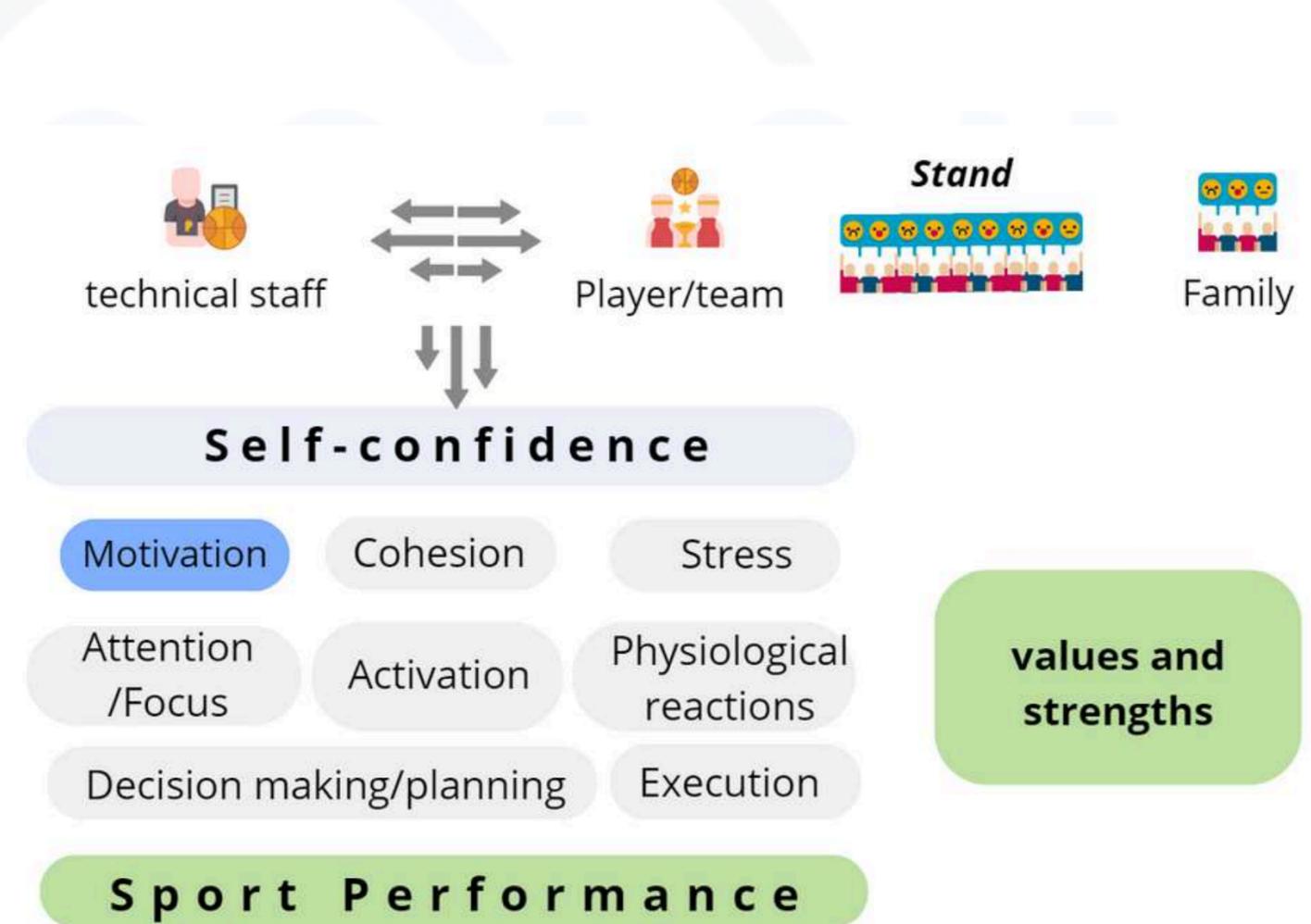
Objective:

- Understand the concept of motivation and its impact on sports performance and athlete well-being.
- Learn how to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
- Identify strategies to improve motivation in athletes.

Key words

#Motivation

#Autonomy

#Competence,

1.**Intrinsic Motivation:**
This comes from within the athlete and is driven by personal enjoyment or interest in the activity. Athletes who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to stay focused, try harder, and enjoy the sport for its own sake.
Example: *An athlete starts extra drills after practice because they genuinely enjoy improving their technique.*

2.**Extrinsic Motivation:**
This motivation is driven by external rewards or to avoid punishment. Athletes may focus on the outcome—winning a trophy or avoiding criticism from the coach.
Example: *An athlete works harder during drills because they know the coach is watching and will praise them or to avoid extra laps after practice.*

3. **Demotivation:**
This occurs when athletes feel disconnected from both the activity and its outcomes. They may lack interest, stop engaging, or avoid the activity altogether.
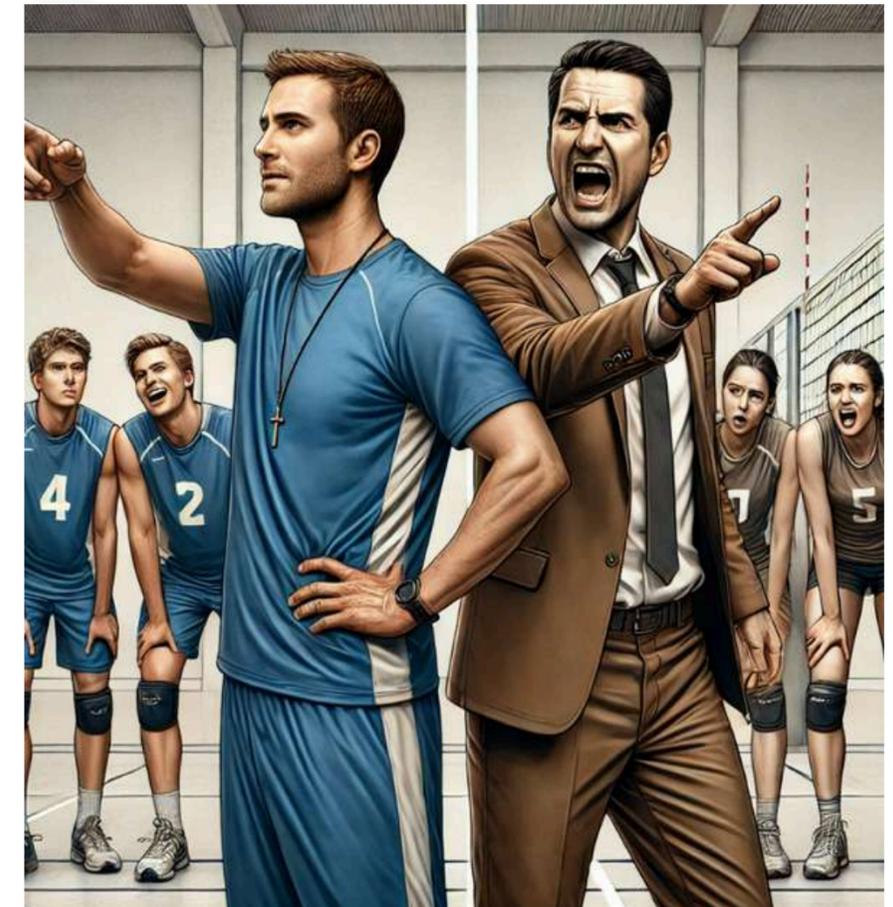Example: *An athlete skips practice or does not take training seriously because they no longer see the purpose of the sport.*

Chapter 2.3 Motivation

COACH'S MOTIVATIONAL STYLE	
MOTIVATION	PRESSURE
Focus on the process	Focus on the result
Enjoyment and well-being are part of the process	Exclusive focus on performance
Active listening	Only listens to themselves
Recognition of achievements / constructive criticism	Continuous criticism
Error as part of learning	Error as failure
Athlete participation in setting goals	Imposition of goals
Coach-athlete relationship independent of results	Coach-athlete relationship depends on winning
Athlete as a person, not "just an athlete"	Athlete with the exclusive role of an athlete
Promotes the athlete's best effort	Obligation to always be the best

M-2

	motivated	unmotivated
activated	Athletes know what they are doing an activity for and they do it with the right energy, attention and tension.	Athletes do not know what they are doing an activity for but they engage in it with sufficient tension and attention. *bored athletes*
non-activated	Athletes know what they are doing an activity for but do not perform it with sufficient tension, attention and energy. *low performance in the activity*	Athletes do not know what they are doing an activity for and do not engage with the right tension. *bored athletes, poor performance, wasted time*

Motivation and activation in athletes (J. Vives 2011)

The activation of athletes is crucial in the coach's communication, and as mentioned by Joan Vives (2011), there is a clear relationship between motivation and activation. A motivated athlete will activate more easily to perform a task than one who is not motivated. These are two distinct processes, but we can encounter:

- Athletes who are motivated and activated for an activity.
- Athletes who are motivated but not activated for an activity.
- Athletes who are not motivated but activated.
- Athletes who are neither motivated nor activated.

A fundamental aspect of maintaining good motivation in athletes is controlling expectations. Expectations are related to everything the athlete thinks or says regarding what they expect to achieve. We have little or no control over these expectations. As coaches, we can modulate and regulate these expectations so that they work in favor of the team and the player and influence their attitude, motivational state, and the establishment of well-directed goals. In the next chapter, we will see this relationship with activation

	Expectations to increase tension	Expectations to reduce tension
about the situation	"In this match we are playing for everything, the past doesn't count, it's the now that counts". "If we lose, we throw it all away".	"There is nothing to gain from this set it's about you enjoying yourselves."
about the opponent	"If you don't defend this player well, he's going to destroy you". "If you defend like a wall, no one will stop you!	They are just as tired as you are, be smarter and wait for the moment that will come for sure, head!"
about the athlete	"If you train like this I'm not going to give you minutes, take it seriously! "You want to be a starter, fight, make an effort every training session, you're going to make it"!	"You just need to keep training the way you are training,"

adapted from J. Vives 2011)

- Understanding athlete needs: Coaches must address the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relationship in their athletes.

- Balancing control and autonomy: The coach should gradually allow athletes more control over their training and decision-making, especially as they gain experience.

- The role of passion: Harmonious passion is healthy and fosters long-term growth, while obsessive passion can lead to burnout.

- Motivating through process, not just outcome: Focusing on technical, tactical, and psychological progress motivates athletes more sustainably than focusing solely on results.

M-2

	Motivation assessment during training	
Objective	**Identify** and foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivation while detecting signs of demotivation.	
Steps:	**Observation Segment:** During a training drill (e.g., game simulations or technical exercises), observe and note:	**Intrinsic Motivation:** Players showing enjoyment, asking questions to improve, or adding extra drills.
		Extrinsic Motivation: Players increasing effort under the coach's supervision or to gain praise/avoid criticism.
		Demotivation: Players appearing disinterested or disengaged.
	Ask players at the end of practice:	"What did you enjoy most today?" "What motivated you to try harder today?"

Against a theoretically inferior team, our team comes out too relaxed, allowing the other team to take the lead in the score. This causes the team to start getting nervous and fail to play their game, eventually losing the match with a sense of frustration.

Introduction:

Optimal activation refers to the ideal level of physical, emotional, and cognitive arousal that allows athletes to perform at their best. Activation (or arousal) is controlled by the autonomic nervous system and is reflected in how "nervous" or "relaxed" an athlete feels before and during competition. The goal is not to eliminate nervousness but to understand and maintain it at an optimal level. This chapter explores how to find the balance between under-activation (too relaxed) and over-activation (too nervous).

Objective:

- Understand the relationship between cognitive and physiological activation for performance.
- Learn the relationship between activation and concentration.
- Identify techniques to manage activation to achieve optimal performance.

Key words

#Activation

#Cognition

#MuscleTension

#Arousal

Components of activation: NERVOUS SYSTEM

Autonomic nervous system and activation: The autonomic nervous system is divided into two parts:

- **Sympathetic:** The system responsible for "fight or flight" responses, increasing heart rate, breathing, and preparing muscles for action.

    Example: An athlete at the starting line, ready to sprint, feels an elevated heart rate and heightened alertness.

- **Parasympathetic:** The "rest and digest" system, which slows the heart rate and helps the body relax and recover.

    Example I: The athlete during cool-down after a race, breathing deeply and slowly.
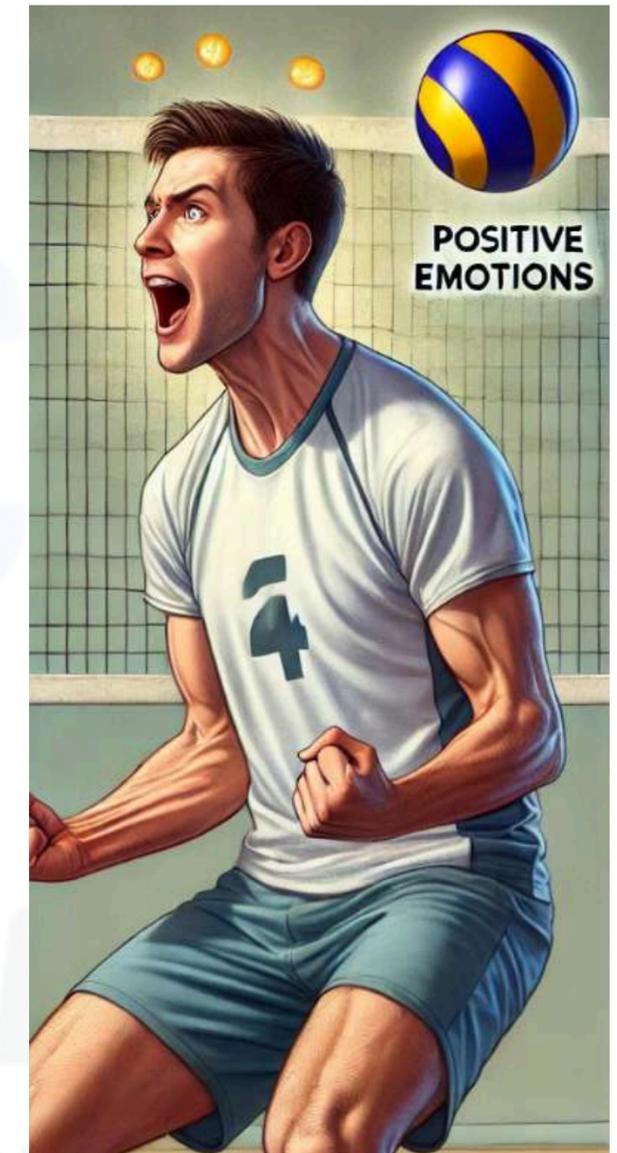
Components of activation: EMOTIONS

The role of emotions in activation

Emotions are intense psychic reactions that trigger both motor and organic responses, particularly in the neurovegetative system (e.g., heart rate, breathing, muscle tension). They can either stimulate and mobilize the athlete, enhancing their performance, or inhibit them, making them less effective or disengaged. Emotional responses are deeply personal and can vary significantly between athletes depending on their past experiences, personality, and psychological makeup.

- **Positive emotions** such as excitement or motivation can lead to optimal performance when they drive the athlete to engage fully in the task, often referred to as "being in the zone." For instance, an athlete might feel a rush of energy from excitement before a match, which raises their activation level to an optimal point, allowing them to perform better.

- **Negative emotions** like anxiety or fear, however, can cause over-activation. This could lead to tension, erratic movements, or even avoidance of certain actions (e.g., a player hesitating to take a crucial shot), as the athlete becomes too nervous or overwhelmed by the situation. Alternatively, emotions like apathy can cause under-activation, leaving the athlete unfocused and sluggish.

Components of activation: COGNITIVE PROCESSES

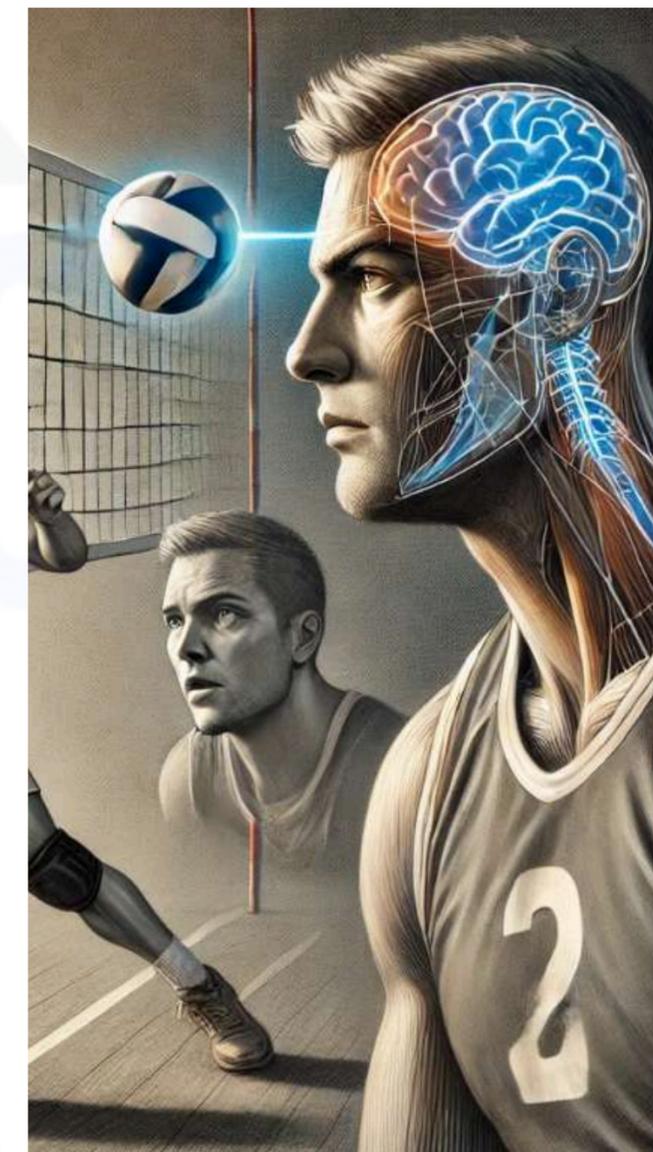**Cognitive processes in activation**

Cognitive processes also play a critical role in determining an athlete's activation level. These processes involve how athletes interpret and react to their environment, including thoughts, beliefs, and attention. Cognitive interpretations can either increase or decrease an athlete's activation, influencing performance.

Interpretation and Appraisal

Athletes are constantly interpreting their surroundings, opponents, and situations. This appraisal process determines whether they see a situation as a challenge or a threat. For example:

- **Challenge perception:** An athlete views a high-pressure situation as a chance to prove themselves and grow. This interpretation leads to heightened but controlled activation, boosting performance.
- **Threat perception:** The same situation is perceived as a potential failure, causing anxiety, tightening muscles, and increasing the chances of mistakes due to over-activation.

These cognitive appraisals are often shaped by past experiences, self-efficacy, and personal expectations. Athletes who believe in their ability to succeed (self-confidence) are more likely to see situations as challenges rather than threats, maintaining an optimal level of activation.
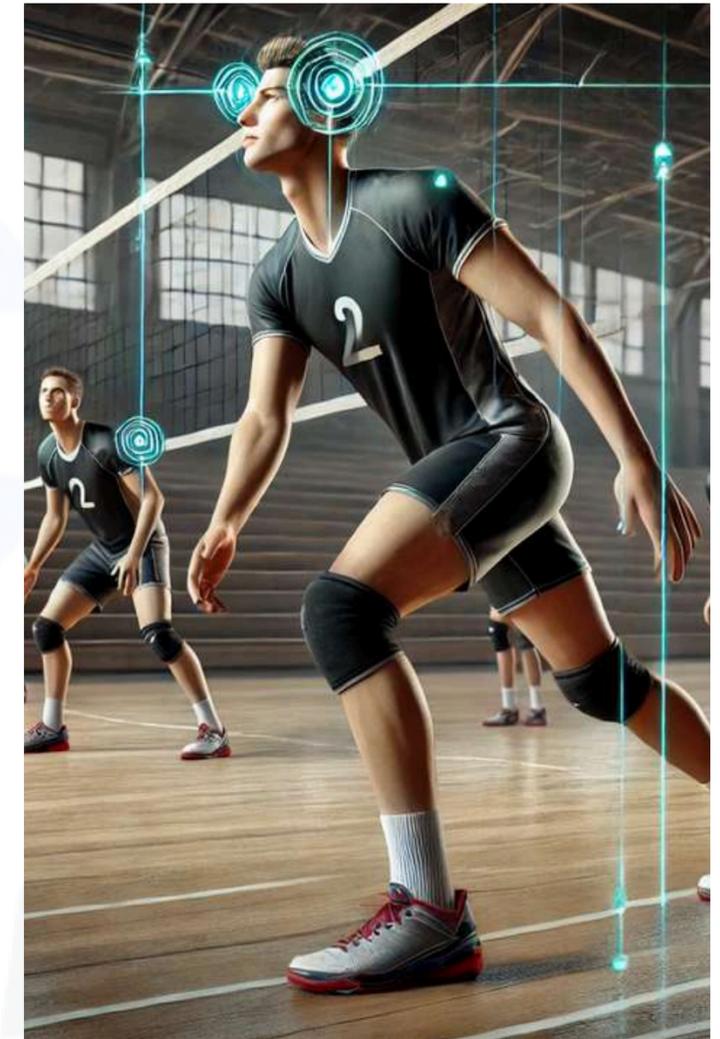
Components of activation: ATTENTIONAL PROCESSES

Attentional processes

As activation levels change, so does the focus of attention. The higher the level of activation, the narrower the attentional focus becomes—a phenomenon that can work both in favor and against the athlete.

- **High activation and narrow focus:** In moments of high activation, the athlete's focus becomes tightly concentrated on the most immediate and critical aspects of the task (e.g., focusing on the ball in volleyball). This is beneficial in moments requiring quick reflexes or precision. However, overly high activation can cause tunnel vision, where the athlete becomes so focused that they ignore other important aspects of the game, such as the positioning of teammates or anticipating opponents' moves.

- **Low activation and broad focus:** On the other hand, when activation is too low, attention may become too broad or unfocused, leading the athlete to lose concentration on key elements of the task, resulting in missed opportunities or mistakes. For example, an athlete may be too relaxed, thinking about unrelated topics or future outcomes instead of focusing on the present moment in the competition.

M-2

	Steps to help your athletes regulate their activation	
1	Identify Sensations	**Encourage** athletes to notice physical and emotional signals (e.g., increased heart rate, tight muscles) indicating their activation level.
2	Recognize optimal activation	**Reflect** on moments when they performed well and felt in control. Identify the level of activation that helped them perform best.
3	Increase activation when needed	**Use** quick movements, deep breathing, or listen to energizing music. Employ key words like 'focus' or 'energy' to boost readiness.
4	Decrease activation when needed	**Practice** deep, slow breathing or muscle relaxation techniques. Use calming words like 'relax' or 'steady' to bring down activation levels.
5	**Regularly** check in with sensations during practice and competition, making adjustments to maintain optimal activation.	

M-2
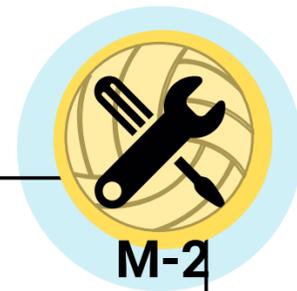
Coach managing collective activation

Situation	Increase activation	Decrease activation	Tone of voice & body language
Team is underperforming	Use high-energy motivational talks, clap, or shout positive cues.	Stay calm, provide concise instructions to avoid panic.	Energetic voice, animated gestures, direct eye contact for motivation.
Start of the game	Encourage team with energetic warm-ups and motivating words.	Ensure focus, remind them to pace energy for the entire game.	Confident tone, open body language, wide gestures.
Team is losing focus	Bring energy from the sidelines, use key phrases to refocus attention.	Call a timeout to reset, offer simple and clear instructions.	Strong voice, purposeful gestures, direct body posture to re-engage attention.
Team faces an important point/play	Shout energizing commands, increase team tempo with quick actions.	Stay calm, suggest focusing on execution rather than outcome.	Clear, firm tone, controlled gestures to reduce tension.
Team is ahead by a big margin	Remind players to maintain intensity, avoid complacency.	Encourage controlled play, remind them to avoid unnecessary risks.	Steady voice, relaxed but assertive body language to maintain control.

M-2

- Achieving optimal activation is a delicate balance of emotions, cognitive processes, and physiological responses.
- Coaches play a critical role in helping athletes recognize their individual levels of activation, teaching them techniques to manage their emotional and cognitive responses.
- Ensuring that athletes are not only physically but also mentally prepared for high-stress situations can make the difference between success and failure.

Combination Drill:

- **Drill Setup**: Set up a sequence involving two phases:
  - Phase 1 (High Activation): 1' Conduct a high-intensity rally drill where the team plays a simulated game focusing on rapid attacks and aggressive blocks. Encourage players to maintain high energy, loud communication, and quick reactions during this phase.
  - Phase 2 (Low Activation): 1' Immediately transition to a controlled passing and setting drill. The team will focus on accurate, gentle passes to a target zone with minimal movement and relaxed breathing.
- **Between transitions**, have players take two deep breaths and visualize lowering or raising their activation level to match the intensity of the next phase.

74

PSYCOACH

M2.5

Attention and concentration

Sport performance

M-2

During a decisive volleyball match, Ana, the libero of the university team, plays a key role. With a tight score, she faces powerful spikes from the opposing team. Her constant concentration and attention are crucial for reading the game and reacting quickly. Thanks to her precise receptions and anticipation, Ana steers the game towards critical point wins, demonstrating the importance of attention and concentration in high-pressure sports moments.

Introduction:

Building from the previous chapter on optimal activation, this chapter explores the critical roles of attention and concentration in sports, especially under pressure. These cognitive skills are key to athletic success, influencing decision-making, performance, and the athlete's ability to remain focused during competition.

76

Objective:

- Develop selective attention skills in athletes to help them focus on key stimuli while filtering out distractions.
- Teach athletes techniques to maintain sustained concentration over extended periods, helping them recognize and manage mental fatigue.

Key words

#SelectiveAttention

#Focus

#Flow State

Attention and concentration:

- **Selective attention** allows athletes to focus on key stimuli while ignoring irrelevant ones.

  Example: Ignoring the shouts from the crowd while focusing on the ball.

- **Concentration** refers to maintaining attention over an extended period. Prolonged intense concentration can lead to fatigue, so breaks are necessary to maintain effectiveness.

  Example: A volleyball player may need mental rest between serves.

Types of attention focus:

- **Broad focus:** Recognizes multiple elements simultaneously (e.g., teammates' and opponents' positions).

- **Narrow focus:** Focuses on a few signals (e.g., ball toss, foot position before a serve).

- **External focus:** Directs attention outward (e.g., positioning in response to a pass).

- **Internal focus:** Attends to thoughts or feelings (e.g., planning strategy or managing stress).

These focuses interact to adapt attention as needed in various game situations. *For example, an athlete might switch from a broad-external focus (awareness of the entire court) to narrow-external (focus on the ball).*

M-2
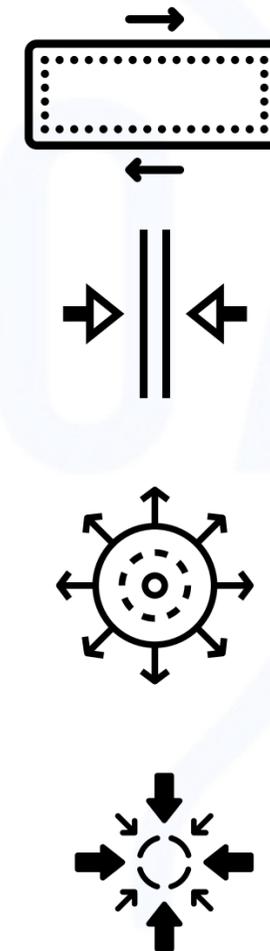
Attentional interferences in volleyball

Situation	Description	Problem
External Distraction: *Crowd noise*	During a serve, the crowd gets loud, distracting the player, leading to a weak serve.	Focus shifts from the serve to the noise, disrupting concentration.
Internal Distraction: *Fear of mistakes*	After two mistakes, a player fixates on their errors instead of the next play.	Focus on past errors instead of staying present in the game.
Over-Attention: *Tunnel vision during serve*	A player focuses too much on the ball toss, missing the opponents' positioning.	Tunnel vision prevents awareness of important external cues.
Multitasking: *Overthinking strategy*	A setter overthinks strategy while making a pass, leading to hesitation.	Dividing attention between tasks causes decision-making delays.
Fatigue: *Mental and physical exhaustion*	Late in a match, a player loses focus and misses easy passes.	Fatigue causes unfocused attention, leading to simple errors.

©

Train attention and concentration in practice and competition

During Training:

- **Simulate game scenarios**: Use drills with distractions to mimic real-game situations, challenging focus. *Example: Add surprise instructions mid-play to shift attention.*
- **Focus shifting drills:** Alternate between broad (team positioning) and narrow (ball handling) focus in drills. *Example: Start by focusing on team setup, then switch to ball control.*
- **Self-talk and visualization:** Teach athletes to use positive self-talk and visualize successful plays before action. *Example: Visualize key moves before starting the drill.*
- **Selective attention training:** Create drills that isolate important game cues while adding distractions. *Example: Play crowd noise while focusing on ball reception.*

During Competition:

- **Pre-Game focus routine**: Establish a routine that includes visualization of key moments before the game.
- **On-court communication**: Use verbal cues between players to maintain focus during the game. *Example: Players call out positions and actions to stay engaged.*
- **Timeout reset:** Use timeouts to refocus on one key objective. *Example: Focus on a single task, like watching the opponent's setter.*
- **In-Game focus cues:** Provide simple, direct focus cues during play. *Example: "Focus on the ball" or "Watch the block."*

80

M-2

COACH'S TASKS

- Help athletes learn their optimal attentional focus based on the situation.
- Teach strategies for switching attention focus during training and competition.
- Balance concentration with mental rest to prevent fatigue.
- Use continuous communication on the court to direct attention and maintain concentration.
- Simulate competition environments in training.
- Promote to use self-talk to maintain concentration.
- Automate movements under conditions of fatigue or mental load to improve resilience.

Team is facing a season of ups and downs. While individual skills are strong, players are not fully connected during key moments of the game. The team's setter, Laura, notices that while the group shares a positive relationship off the court, the unity on the court is inconsistent. When pressure mounts, they often fail to support one another, leading to disjointed plays and missed opportunities. Despite individual efforts, the lack of cohesion is preventing the team from reaching its full potential.

Introduction:

Team cohesion is one of the most crucial variables that links together many of the psychological elements we've explored in previous chapters—such as motivation, self-confidence, and concentration. Cohesion affects how athletes perform, their sense of belonging, and the overall team dynamic during training and competition. For teams to perform optimally, a shared sense of purpose, connection, and trust must be cultivated both on and off the court.

This chapter aims to deepen our understanding of group cohesion and its direct connection to performance. We will explore how to enhance cohesion, manage group dynamics, and relate it to other key performance variables like activation, motivation, and attention.

M-2

Objective:

- Understand the importance of team cohesion in achieving sports performance goals.

- Identify strategies to enhance group unity and its impact on individual performance.

- Recognize the role of cohesion in reducing anxiety, enhancing self-confidence, and improving communication within the team.

Key words

#Cohesion

#Social Support

#Trust

What is group cohesion?

Cohesion refers to the tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in pursuing its goals and objectives. Cohesion can be divided into two aspects:

- **Task Cohesion:** The shared commitment of team members to achieve common performance goals.

- **Social Cohesion:** The personal bonds and relationships between teammates that influence their behavior both on and off the court.
Athletes who feel connected to their teammates, share common goals, and support one another are more likely to experience flow, increased focus, and heightened levels of self-confidence.

84

Relationship & benefits between cohesion and other psychological variables:

- **Self-confidence:** When players trust their teammates, they feel more confident about their role, knowing others will provide support when necessary. This reduces pressure on individual performance and allows athletes to focus on their tasks.

- **Motivation:** A cohesive team often shares the same goals and motivation, which promotes higher levels of effort and persistence. Group cohesion provides emotional and social support, which enhances motivation during difficult times.

- **Attention and concentration:** Teams with strong cohesion are better at communication, which helps players maintain focus on the task at hand. Continuous communication within the team can help players regain concentration after distractions.

- **Activation cevels:** Cohesive teams can better regulate collective activation. For example, if the group is too relaxed or over-activated, a strong leader or coach can help synchronize activation levels to match the demands of the game.

Factors that hinder team cohesion

- Lack of effective communication

- Unhealthy competition between teammates

- Misaligned goals

- Lack of emotional support

- Poorly defined or ambiguous roles

- Favoritism from the coach

- Unresolved personal conflicts

- Lack of commitment

- Absence of team-building activities off the court

- Limited constructive feedback

85

M-2

Reflection for the Coach:

- How do I currently foster cohesion within my team? What aspects of social and task cohesion could be improved?

- How can I integrate cohesion-building exercises into regular training sessions?

- How can I use the team's cohesion to manage motivation, focus, and self-confidence during high-pressure moments?

Chapter 2.5 Cohesion

M-2

Strategy	Description	Example
Team-building activities	Organized activities to foster trust, communication, and bonding among players.	Arrange a team outing or group challenges to improve interpersonal dynamics.
Clear role definition	Ensure that every player understands their role and responsibilities.	Define the specific role of each player within the team during training and matches.
Open communication	Encourage transparent communication between players and coaching staff.	Hold regular meetings where players can express concerns or feedback.
Promote team goals	Focus on common objectives rather than individual achievements.	Set collective goals for the team and remind players of the shared vision.
Positive reinforcement	Acknowledge and praise both individual and team efforts.	Celebrate teamwork moments during games with public praise.
Conflict resolution	Address conflicts quickly and fairly to avoid lingering tensions.	Facilitate discussions between players to resolve disagreements constructively.
Fostering mutual support	Encourage players to support each other on and off the field.	Create a culture where players celebrate each other's successes and support during challenges.
Inclusion and diversity	Ensure all team members feel valued, regardless of background or skill level.	Organize team activities that promote inclusion and acknowledge diverse strengths.

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M3.1

Effective communication

Effective communication in training

Amanda is the captain of her volleyball team. During the last match, she noticed that her teammates were not responding well to the coach's instructions. The coach was frustrated, shouting commands, but the more he raised his voice, the more confused the team became. Amanda, feeling the tension, started making mistakes herself, as the pressure from the coach's inconsistent communication caused anxiety and hesitation in her actions.

Introduction:

Effective communication is one of the fundamental pillars for success in sports coaching. No matter how excellent our strategies or plans are, if we fail to communicate our ideas clearly to the athletes, all that work can lose its effectiveness. This chapter explores how communication not only influences sports performance but also the athlete's well-being, and how coaches can improve this essential skill.

M3.1- Effective communication in training

Objective:

- Understand the importance of effective communication in the sports context, especially in interactions between coaches and athletes.
- Identify key communication principles that positively impact both the athlete's performance and well-being.
- Learn to adjust communication based on the individual needs of each player, adapting tone, body language, and messaging to maximize its impact.

Key words

#EffectiveCommunication
#ActiveListening
#Persuasion

What is effective communication?

- Communication in sports goes beyond giving instructions. It includes verbal and non-verbal aspects (gestures, tone of voice, eye contact), and its consistency is crucial for building trust.
- Example: A coach who asks for calm but is nervous or agitated creates confusion and distrust.

Is it impossible to not communicate!

When coaches communicate well

- **Persuading:** Convincing athletes to adopt certain strategies or believe in their capabilities.
- **Assessing:** Providing feedback on performance and skill levels of athletes.
- **Informing:** Giving instructions, tactics, and strategies of the game.
- **Motivating:** Enhancing the motivation and morale of athletes.
- **Resolving Conflicts:** Handling and resolving disputes or disagreements within the team.
- **Activating:** Stimulating athletes before and during competitions.
- **Conditioning:** Influencing the mindset and attitudes of athletes towards training and competition.
- **Transmitting Values:** Instilling values such as teamwork, respect, and discipline.
- **Cohesion:** Promoting unity and team spirit.
- **Concentrating:** Assisting athletes in focusing and maintaining concentration.

10+1 key ideas for effective communication:

1. **Clarity of the message:** Be clear about what we want to communicate.
2. **The impact of how we say it:** Only 7% of communication is in what we say, 38% is in our tone of voice, and 55% is in our gestures and body language.
3. **Consistency:** Our behavior must align with our message.
4. **Conviction:** Believe in what you say and show it.
5. **Choosing the right moment:** Not every moment is ideal for communication; find the right moment for maximum impact.
6. **Use your strengths:** Leverage your virtues as a communicator.
7. **Emotional impact:** Communication should evoke emotions.
8. **Empathy:** Put yourself in the other person's shoes and adjust your message.
9. **Adaptation:** Adapt to the preferred communication channels of others (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).
10. **Positivity:** Use humor and maintain a positive attitude whenever possible.

+1: Always focus communication on what we want to achieve, not what we want to avoid.

93

Reflection for the Coach:

- How we say things is more important than the content itself. The majority of our communication's impact comes from how we express it (gestures, tone, attitude).
- Consistency between what we say and how we act is fundamental for building trust with the athletes.
- Communication should be centered on the athlete's needs and context. It's essential to adjust both the message and the way it's delivered.
- Positive feedback and continuous reinforcement create a safe environment that improves performance and motivation.

Variable	Task	Description
Body language	Reflect on how you usually communicate with your athletes. Do you think your tone, body language, and behavior are consistent with what you want to communicate?	Record part of your next training session and analyze if there's coherence between what you verbally communicate and how you express it through your body language.
Motivation	In your next session, focus on giving positive feedback immediately after an error. Observe how the player reacts and whether their motivation changes.	Take the time to praise effort, even if the outcome wasn't what was expected.

Javier is a basketball coach. He's noticing that some key players on his team aren't following his game instructions, even after repeating them several times. He knows they're talented, but he starts to question whether he's really persuading them about the importance of these adjustments. One day, he decides to try a new strategy: instead of giving direct orders, he begins to ask questions that encourage the players to reflect on their own decisions and how they can improve.

Introduction:

In this chapter, we will explore the tools of persuasion and influence that coaches can use to improve their interaction with athletes. The key difference between persuasion and influence is that persuasion is a deliberate and strategic action, while influence can happen unintentionally. Knowing when and how to use these techniques can change the dynamic between coach and athlete, enhancing understanding and execution of instructions.

Objective:

- Understand the differences between persuasion and influence in the sports context.
- Learn how to apply persuasion techniques in training and competition.
- Develop the ability to influence athletes positively and effectively.

Key words

#Persuasion
#Influence
#CommunicationStrategies

1. Persuading vs. influencing:

- **Persuasion** involves getting someone to voluntarily accept our viewpoint, while **influence** can occur unintentionally. To persuade effectively, you must:

  - Be clear about the message you want to communicate.
  - Consider the emotional impact of your message.
  - Use both verbal and non-verbal communication consistently.
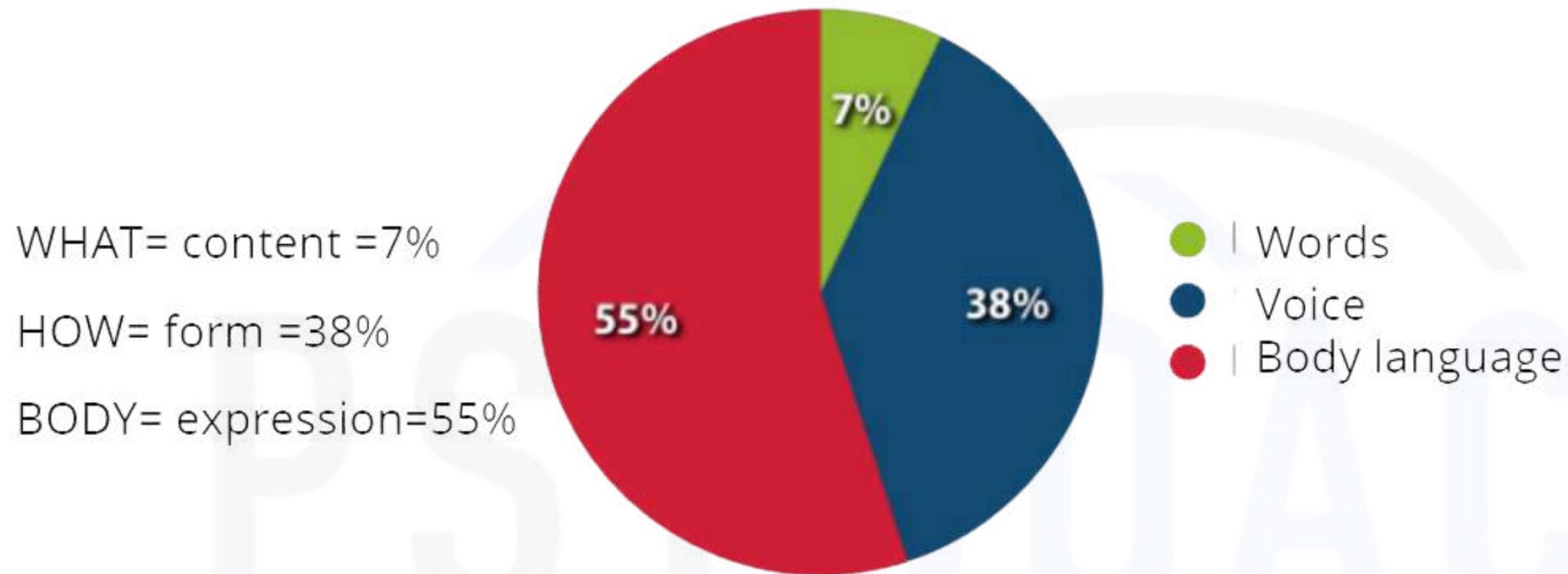
2. The 3 pillars of persuasion:

- **Message intentionality:** Define what we want to achieve with our communication.
- **Argumentation:** Develop a clear structure of arguments to support our message.
- **Emotions:** Effective persuasion must consider the emotional impact on the athlete.

WHAT= content =7%

HOW= form =38%

BODY= expression=55%

7%

55%

38%

I Words
I Voice
I Body language

3. Interpersonal persuasion

Face-to-face communication adds non-verbal components (gestures, tone of voice, body posture) that directly influence persuasion. What we say has minimal impact compared to how we say it and how we support it with our body language.

4. Techniques for starting persuasive communication:

Opening question: Capture the athlete's attention by asking a question that involves them.
Storytelling: Share a relevant anecdote.
Impactful phrase: Use a phrase that motivates or provokes reflection.
Quote: Include an inspiring quote that reinforces your message.
Objects or symbols: Use a visual object that grabs attention and reinforces the communication.

Reflection for the coach:

- Persuasion is a strategic tool and should be used deliberately to change athletes' attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs.

- The impact of our communication lies not only in what we say (7%), but in how we say it (38%) and how we accompany it (55% with gestures and body posture).

- Persuasion requires that the message is emotionally relevant and consistent with our actions.

Before you speak

THINK

T -Is it **t**rue ?

H -Is it **h**epful?

I -Is it **i**nspiring?

N -Is it **n**ecessary?

K -Is it **k**ind?

100

Task	Description
Observe and Persuade: During your next training session, instead of giving direct orders, try persuading your players by asking questions that make them reflect on their decisions during the game.	Develop a persuasive message to motivate your players to focus more on their training.
Structure Your Message: Prepare a key message for your team before a game or training session. Focus on how you will deliver it: the tone of voice, body posture, and the emotions you want to convey.	During the next session, observe how your players respond to open-ended questions instead of direct commands.

In a crucial volleyball match, Carla, a middle blocker, was struggling with her positioning during the game. Despite the coach's repeated instructions, she couldn't seem to correct her mistakes. After the game, Carla approached the coach and explained that she felt overwhelmed by too much information at once. The coach realized that he had been giving her too many commands in a high-pressure moment, making it difficult for her to process. By listening to her concerns, they both agreed to work on simplifying the communication during games, helping Carla improve her performance and confidence.
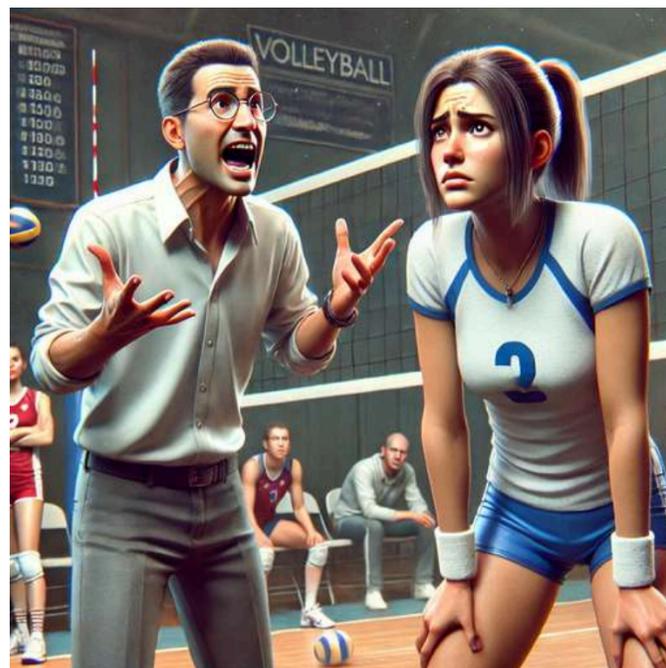
Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the importance of personalizing communication to meet the individual needs of athletes. Communication is a two-way process, and listening to your athletes is essential for understanding their concerns and helping them develop both as players and individuals.

Objective:

- Learn to identify the individual communication needs of athletes.
- Explore different communication styles and how to adapt them to each athlete.
- Enhance the effectiveness of communication for athlete development and performance.

Key words

#Active listening
#ConstructiveDialogue
#Empathy

Voice reflects what you feel:

As coaches, our voice and tone play a key role in how we communicate with athletes. A coach who shouts and commands without considering the athlete's state may cause more harm than good. It's essential to be aware of not only the words we use but also the tone and body language that accompany them.

Many coaches fall into the habit of giving orders without waiting for a response, preventing athletes from expressing their thoughts or concerns. Effective communication requires creating the **right moments** for a two-way conversation, where **athletes can listen, process, and provide feedback.**

104
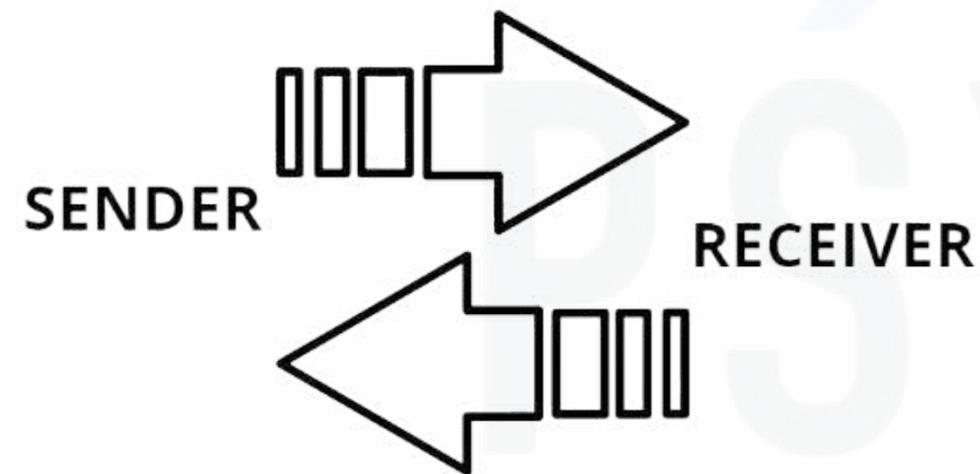
Two-way communication process

The importance of active listening:
Signs of active listening include:

- Maintaining eye contact or verbal engagement
- Providing feedback and asking questions
- Nodding or showing agreement
- Repeating important points to ensure understanding
- Avoiding interruptions
- Nods in agreement ("uh-huh," "mm-hmm," etc.)

By actively listening, coaches can better understand their athletes' needs, concerns, and suggestions, creating a supportive environment for both personal and team growth.

Remember:

Reflection for the Coach:

- Effective communication is a two-way process; it requires both talking and listening.

- Coaches must recognize when to give instructions and when to listen to their athletes' feedback.

- Communication can be improved by adapting to the athlete's communication style and actively engaging in their development.

Before you speak

THINK

T -Is it **t**rue ?

H -Is it **h**epful?

I -Is it **i**nspiring?

N -Is it **n**ecessary?

K -Is it **k**ind?

106

Task	Description
Direct Feedback Exercise:	During the next practice, choose a specific moment to give instructions to a player. Then, ask the player to repeat back what they understood to ensure the message was clear. Observe if there are any differences between what you intended to convey and what the player understood.
Q&A Session:	At the end of practice, organize a brief question-and-answer session with your players. Ask them if there were any moments when the instructions weren't clear and discuss how you could improve communication for future situations.

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M3.4

Barriers to effective communication

Effective communication

M-3

Jose, a volleyball coach, notices that Johan, one of his players, is struggling during training. Jose feels frustrated because, despite giving Johan clear instructions, his performance isn't improving. After the session, Jose approaches Johan to talk, but things don't go as planned.

Introduction:

This chapter focuses on identifying and overcoming common barriers in communication between coaches and athletes. It's crucial for coaches to recognize these barriers and learn techniques to handle them effectively, improving communication quality and creating a more cohesive, effective team environment.

109

Objective:

- Identify common communication barriers between coaches and athletes.
- Explore techniques to overcome these obstacles.
- Improve communication quality for a more cohesive team environment.

Key words

#Barriers
#ActiveListening
#Adaptability

Techniques to Overcome Communication Barriers:

1. **Active listening:** Ensure the athlete feels heard. Maintain eye contact, ask questions, and provide positive feedback.
2. **Empathy:** Put yourself in the athlete's shoes to better understand their challenges and feelings.
3. Clarity and simplicity: Use clear and direct language to avoid misunderstandings, especially in high-pressure situations.
4. **Constructive feedback:** Provide feedback that motivates and guides, without being overly critical.
5. **Adaptability:** Adjust your communication style to match the athlete's needs, modifying tone, speed, or focus when necessary.

M3.4- Barriers to effective communication

Field	Description
Emotional barriers:	A player who is frustrated by their performance or a recent result might struggle to focus on instructions from the coach.
Perception barriers:	An athlete who feels the coach doesn't trust them may misinterpret constructive criticism as a personal attack
Linguistic barriers:	In multicultural teams, some players may not fully understand the instructions if they don't speak the same language as the coach.
Physical barriers:	In noisy environments, like a gym with loud music or in the middle of a game with a cheering crowd, verbal communication can be hindered.
Gender barriers	In some cases, coaches and players may have preconceived notions about how athletes of a certain gender should be treated, affecting communication.
Attitude barriers:	An athlete with a negative attitude towards the team or their performance may reject feedback, making effective communication difficult.

communication disturbers

- The environment
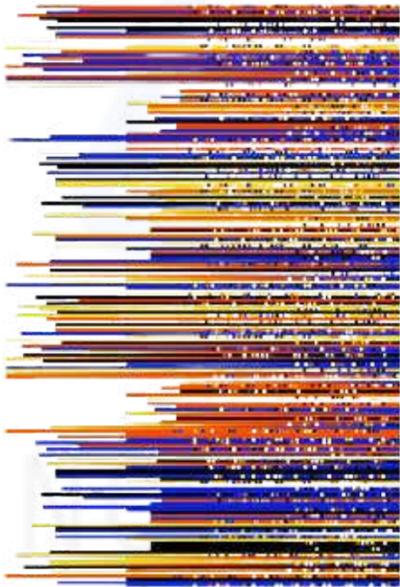- Wrong tone
- Negative phrases
- Incoherence
- Imprecision
- Rejecting or minimizing the other
- Getting distracted
- Interrupting
- Prejudice
  Dogmatic thinking
- Lack of empathy
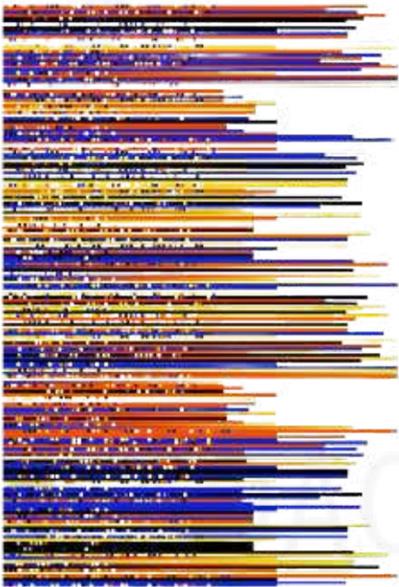
Situation

Coach Jose:
"*Johan, you're not following what I'm telling you during practice. I keep explaining how to position yourself better, but you're not getting it. What's going on?*"

Johan (looking down):
"*I don't know, Coach. I just feel like there's a lot going on. I hear what you're saying, but it's too much information at once, and I get lost.*"

Coach Jose (sighs):
"*I'm trying to help you improve, but if you don't follow my instructions, how can you get better?*"

Johan (hesitates):
"*I don't know how to explain it… I try to listen, but when you give so many commands in the middle of the game, it feels overwhelming.*"

Management

Realizing this, Jose takes a step back and decides to adjust his approach:

-**Coach Jose** (changing tone):
"*Okay, I didn't realize it was too much for you. Let's work on this together. How about I focus on giving you just one or two key instructions during the game, and we review the rest after the match? Does that sound better?*"

Johan (nodding):
"*Yeah, that would help a lot. It's easier for me when there's less to think about at once.*"

Coach Jose (smiling):

"*Alright, that's what we'll do. We'll keep it simple during the game, and we'll break it down afterward. I know you've got what it takes, let's focus on making this work together.*"

- Adaptability and empathy are essential for overcoming communication barriers.
- Clarity in messages improves team morale and performance.
- Active listening and constructive feedback are the most effective tools for enhancing interaction.

- **Simplify Instructions in Real-Time:** During the next training session, select a moment when a player seems overwhelmed or confused. Instead of giving multiple instructions, focus on delivering just one clear and simple directive. Observe how the player responds and adjust your communication based on their reaction.
- **Active Listening Challenge:** Dedicate time during a break or after training to have a one-on-one conversation with one of your players. Ask them about their experience in the last match or training. Practice active listening by not interrupting, maintaining eye contact, and summarizing what they say before responding.

M3.5

Communicating motivation and cohesion

Effective communication

M-3

"Alright team, listen up! We're falling behind because we're not playing together. Forget about the mistakes—what matters now is how we move forward as a team. Trust each other out there! Communicate, motivate each other, and keep the energy up. We win this game by staying united and pushing through. Every single one of you counts, so let's do this together! Focus, fight, and finish strong!"

Introduction:

In sports, effective communication is essential for both motivating athletes and fostering team cohesion. These two elements, motivation and cohesion, are tightly interconnected. When athletes feel motivated and part of a cohesive unit, their individual and collective performances improve significantly. This chapter explores how coaches can use communication to build both motivation and team cohesion, which are critical for long-term success and well-being in athletes.

Objective:

- Understand the role of communication in motivating athletes.
- Learn how communication fosters team cohesion.
- Develop strategies for promoting motivation and cohesion simultaneously.
- Equip coaches with practical tools to apply during training and competitions.

Key words

#Motivation
#Cohesion
#ContextualLeadership

Leadership styles in sports:

Authoritarian leadership: The coach takes full control, setting rules and making decisions without input from athletes. This style is effective in creating discipline but may limit player initiative.

Democratic leadership: This approach invites athletes to participate in decision-making. By encouraging collaboration, it boosts morale and helps players feel ownership over team goals.

Delegative leadership: The coach delegates decisions to experienced players, promoting independence and accountability. This style works well with mature teams but requires strong trust.

However, modern developmental and high-performance sports require **contextual leadership:** This approach involves adapting the leadership style according to the team's needs and circumstances. Switching between directive and collaborative approaches ensures that communication fits the moment, maximizing motivation and cohesion.
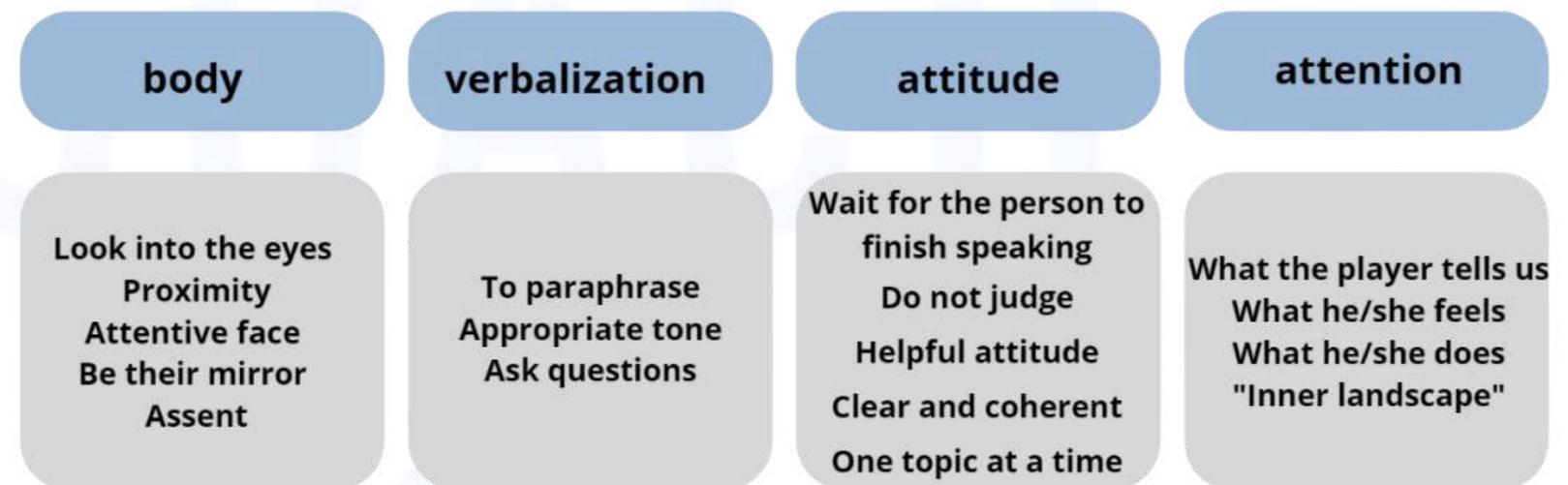
117

Communicating motivation

Motivation is at the core of an athlete's desire to improve and perform. Coaches play a crucial role in driving this motivation by how they communicate with their athletes. Motivation can be extrinsic (fueled by external rewards like winning) or intrinsic (driven by personal satisfaction or growth). Both types can be enhanced by effective communication.

Imagine a volleyball player who is struggling with her spikes. Instead of focusing on the mistakes, the coach praises her efforts and highlights how close she is to perfecting her form. This recognition fuels the player's motivation to keep working hard, knowing that her progress is noticed and valued.

Your tone and non-verbal communication (body language, facial expressions) can significantly influence an athlete's emotional state. Use these tools to energize, calm, or inspire athletes based on their needs.

body	verbalization	attitude	attention
Look into the eyes
Proximity
Attentive face
Be their mirror
Assent	To paraphrase
Appropriate tone
Ask questions	Wait for the person to finish speaking
Do not judge
Helpful attitude
Clear and coherent
One topic at a time	What the player tells us
What he/she feels
What he/she does
"Inner landscape"

Key communication techniques for motivation:

Goal setting:

Set clear, achievable goals that athletes can relate to. Goals should be process-oriented rather than focused solely on the outcome (e.g., focus on improving technical skills, not just winning a match).

Encourage athletes to set personal goals aligned with the team's objectives.

Positive reinforcement:

Offer constructive feedback that highlights strengths while suggesting improvements.

Acknowledge efforts as well as achievements to boost confidence and maintain motivation.

Tailored feedback:

Adapt your feedback style to fit each athlete's needs. Some athletes may respond better to detailed technical advice, while others might need emotional support.

Communicating cohesion

Team cohesion is the sense of unity and shared purpose among athletes. A cohesive team is one where athletes trust and support each other, working towards common goals. Communication is the cornerstone of building and maintaining this unity, ensuring that every athlete feels valued and part of the group.

During a critical volleyball match, one player feels isolated after making a series of mistakes. The coach steps in and uses a team huddle to remind everyone of their collective strength, encouraging the players to support each other on and off the court. This simple act re-establishes the team's focus and rebuilds their unity.

Be attentive to behaviors that hinder cohesion

- Excessive individualism
- Not having team objectives or not respecting them
- Confusion or ambiguity regarding roles within the team
- Lack of commitment to coexistence rules
- Conflicts arising from opposing interests
- High turnover or renewal of team members
- Clashes between leaders within the team
- Disputes among team members for leadership
- Incompatibility of personalities within the group
- Excessive internal competition among team members
- Continued perception of being evaluated by others

M-3

Key communication techniques for building cohesion:

Fostering open communication:
- Encourage athletes to voice their concerns, share ideas, and provide feedback in team meetings or one-on-one sessions.
- Use inclusive language, such as "we" and "our team," to reinforce the sense of belonging.

Resolving conflicts:
- Address conflicts early and directly, guiding athletes through the resolution process with empathy and fairness.
- Create a safe space for athletes to express their emotions without judgment.

Emphasizing shared goals:
- Reinforce the team's overall goals in every interaction. Make sure every player understands their role in achieving these goals.
- Promote group discussions where athletes can contribute to decision-making, helping them feel invested in the team's success.

Team-building activities:
- Incorporate exercises that require teamwork, such as group problem-solving tasks or games where success depends on cooperation.
- Schedule informal team activities outside of training sessions to strengthen interpersonal relationships.

The best team cohesion technique sometimes is to have a barbecue together!


121

M-3

- Motivation and Cohesion are Interconnected: When athletes feel motivated, they are more likely to engage positively with the team, strengthening group cohesion.

- Communication is Key: Both motivation and cohesion rely on effective, empathetic communication from the coach.

- Positive Reinforcement Builds Confidence: Acknowledge efforts and achievements to maintain a healthy motivational environment.

- Shared Goals Strengthen Cohesion: Ensure that team objectives are clear and every athlete feels their contribution is valued.

- Conflict Resolution is Essential for Cohesion: Address any conflicts within the team swiftly to maintain trust and harmony

Task: Set a motivational goal

- Challenge your athletes to set one personal goal and one team-oriented goal for the next game or training session. Discuss how achieving these goals will benefit both the individual and the team as a whole.
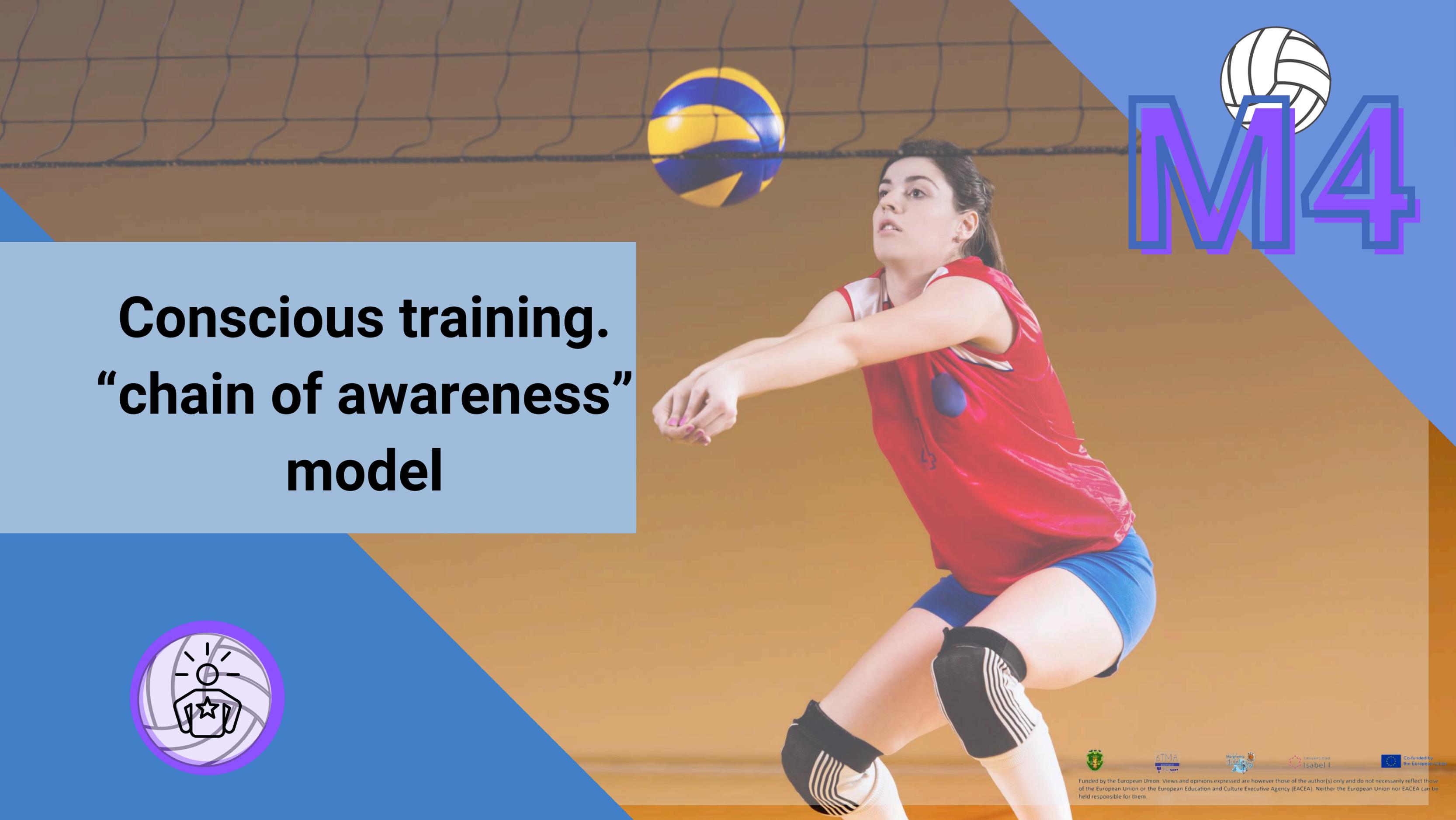
122

Conscious training. "chain of awareness" model

M4

PSYCOACH

M4.1

Conscious training. "chain of awareness" model

Self-efficacy and sports performance

M-4

Sara is a volleyball coach who has been struggling to improve her team's defensive coordination. During a practice session, she notices that her players lack confidence, which affects their performance. Despite giving clear instructions, they seem frustrated, and this frustration begins to affect their game. After practice, Sara realizes that her team's low self-confidence might be the underlying cause of their poor performance.

Introduction:

Chain of Awareness model

Welcome to Module 4, a crucial step in understanding how to enhance athletes' performance and well-being through structured psychological interventions. Throughout this module, we will dive into the core concept of self-efficacy and how it influences an athlete's ability to overcome challenges, thrive under pressure, and grow in both skill and confidence. We will be introducing the **Chain of Awareness**, a practical and structured model designed to guide coaches in helping athletes understand their strengths, set achievable goals, and build the confidence needed to reach peak performance.

In this chapter, we will focus on **self-efficacy**, a key factor that influences both the performance and well-being of athletes. Self-efficacy refers to an athlete's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks successfully. Understanding and improving self-efficacy can significantly enhance athletic performance and contribute to the athlete's overall well-being.

Objective:

- Understand the Consciousness Chain and its components.
- Identify how thoughts, emotions, and behaviors influence athlete performance.
- Learn practical strategies to guide athletes through the Consciousness Chain, improving both their mental state and their in-game performance.

Key words

#Self-efficacy
#Wellbeing
#ChainAwareness

self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a fundamental belief that we all have about our own ability to successfully carry out specific tasks or achieve goals. In the context of sports, it refers to the confidence that an athlete has in their ability to perform sports skills, face challenges, and achieve their goals in sporting activity.

Self-Efficacy and performance
Research in sports psychology has consistently shown that there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy and sports performance. When an athlete has high self-efficacy in a specific skill or task, they are more likely to put in effort, concentrate, and be successful in that task. On the other hand, when self-efficacy is low, difficulties such as lack of effort, abandonment of the activity, and performance deterioration can arise.

**Self-efficacy and the athlete's well-being**
It not only influences performance but also impacts the athlete's well-being. When an athlete feels confident in their abilities, they experience less stress, anxiety, and frustration. Conversely, low self-efficacy can lead to feelings of insecurity, dissatisfaction, and demotivation.

126

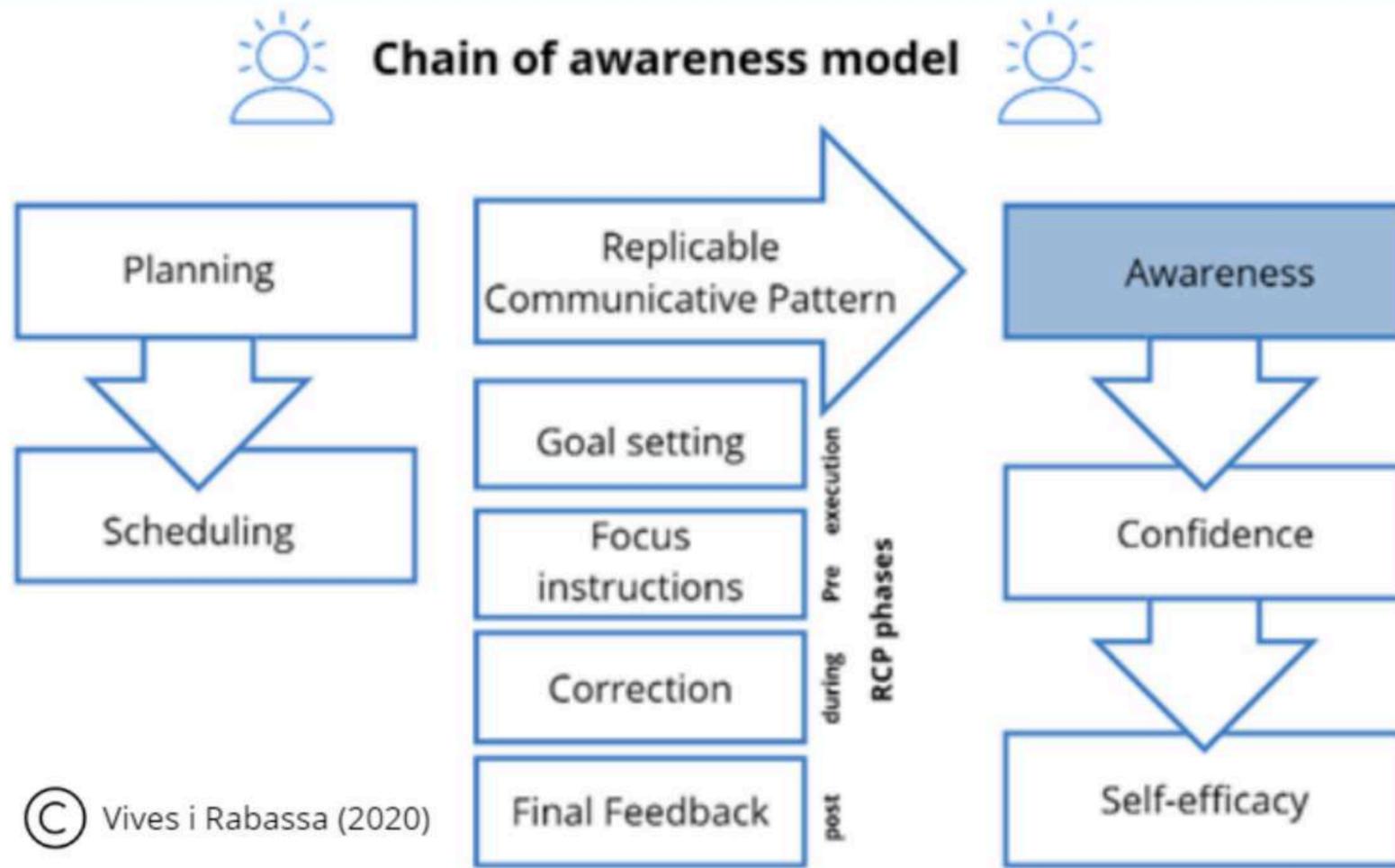**The model we will use: model of the chain of awareness (MCA)**
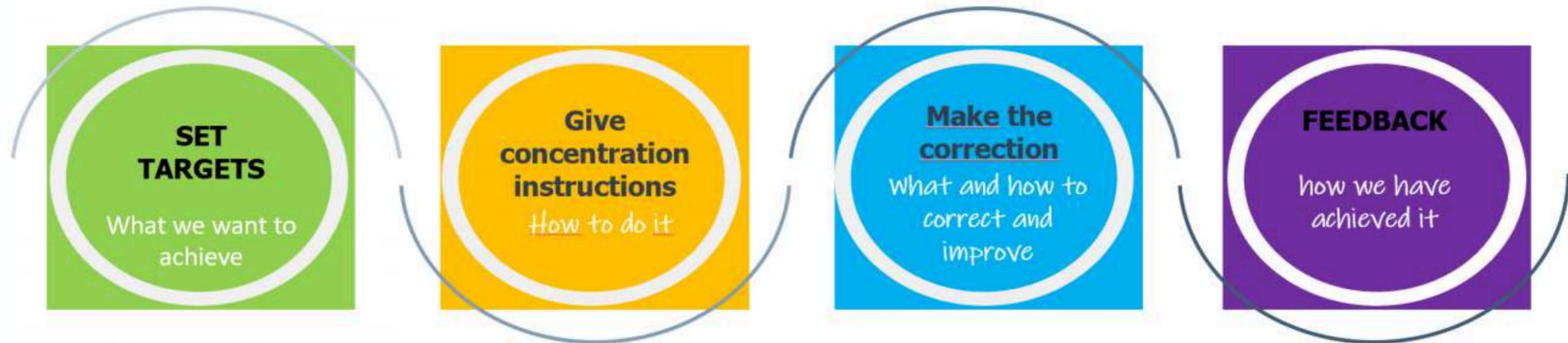
Proposed by Vives (2011), this model aligns with "Empowering Coaching™" in promoting the empowerment of the coach to satisfy the athlete's perception of competence and autonomy. It is distinguished by focusing on specific communicative indications for the teaching process, such as instruction, correction, and feedback, guiding coaches towards a supportive and less punitive climate. A crucial aspect of the MCA model is that it promotes the generation of awareness in athletes about the learning process and the skills acquired, which leads to an increase in the perception of competence and autonomy, strengthening positive beliefs related to confidence.

M-4

Chain of awareness model

| Planning |
| Scheduling |

| Replicable Communicative Pattern |
| Goal setting |
| Focus instructions |
| Correction |
| Final Feedback |

Pre execution / during RCP phases / post

| Awareness |
| Confidence |
| Self-efficacy |

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The MCA model helps us to:
- Focus on continuous improvement. Guide players towards the process, the behaviors we want to see, rather than focusing on the outcome (consequence).
- Increase self-confidence through raising awareness of one's own resources, abilities, and capacities.
- Be able to show in competition the level achieved in training with the help of routines and the coach's communication.

128

- **Planning and Scheduling:** Successful training sessions begin with thoughtful planning and scheduling.

- **Replicable Communicative Pattern (RCP)**: During execution, the RCP follows four critical phases—goal setting, focus instructions, correction, and final feedback.

- **Awareness and Confidence:** The model emphasizes creating awareness in athletes, helping them understand their own capabilities, actions, and outcomes.

- **Focus Instructions:** Clear, concise instructions that guide athletes' attention toward what is important in each phase of training.

- **Feedback Loop:** The final feedback phase ties everything together by reflecting on what was achieved, what needs improvement, and how this feeds into the athlete's self-awareness and future training

- **Clarity in Goal Setting:** In your next training session, before starting any drill, take a few minutes to clearly communicate what you expect from the players. Define a specific objective for each activity and ensure that everyone understands it. Ask the players if they have any questions and confirm that they know what they need to do before starting. Observe if there's an improvement in focus and execution when goals are clearly defined.
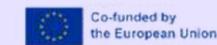
M-4

Anna, a volleyball coach, in a scouting session asks her players what the team's objectives are for this season. There's silence, someone answers: "Win?", "Improve?", "Enjoy?"... She realizes that the team does not have clear or agreed-upon objectives. When she asks about individual objectives, they find it even harder to answer.

Introduction:

Planning is the foundation of any successful performance. In the **Chain of Awareness model**, the planning and scheduling phases are crucial to ensuring that both athletes and coaches are aligned in their goals and actions. A clear plan not only prepares the athlete but also instills confidence and clarity in execution.

Planning is essential in sports, and it should be coherent with general and specific objectives in the short, medium, and long term. This is crucial for later being able to generate awareness in learning during training and competition. We will analyse how detailed planning, adapted to individual and collective needs, can be a key pillar for sports success, and how this influences the motivation and self-efficacy of athletes.

131

M-4

Objective:

- Develop skills in formulating objectives and effective planning at both individual and collective levels.
- Learn to adapt planning to the specific abilities and needs of each athlete.
- Promote team cohesion and motivation through inclusive and participatory planning.

Key words

#GoalSetting
#Planning
#Scheduling

Chain of awareness model

Planning	Replicable Communicative Pattern	Awareness
Scheduling	Goal setting	Confidence
	Focus instructions	Self-efficacy
	Correction	
	Final Feedback	

Pre execution during RCP phases post

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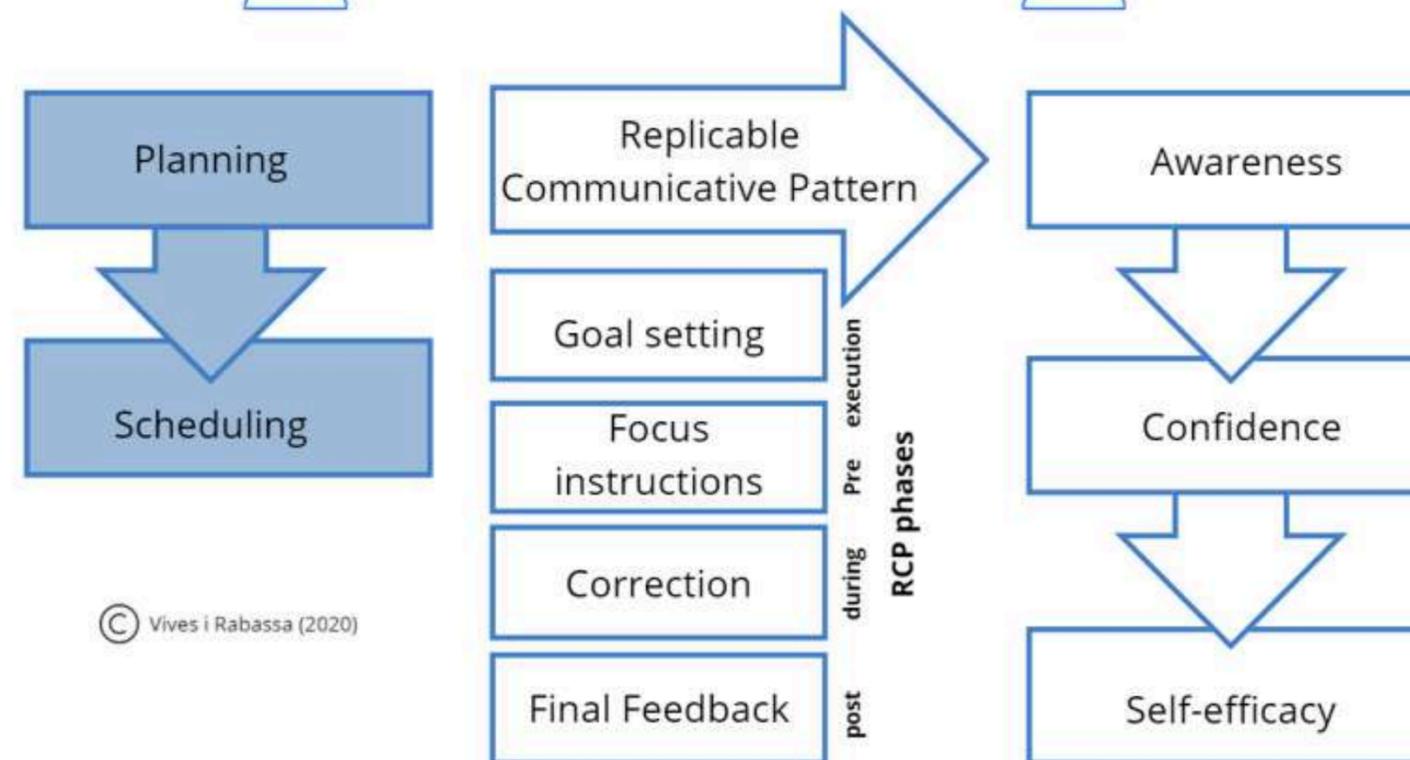
A good team understands the overall goals; a great team is made of players who also have clear personal objectives that contribute to the team's success.

How many squares do you see?

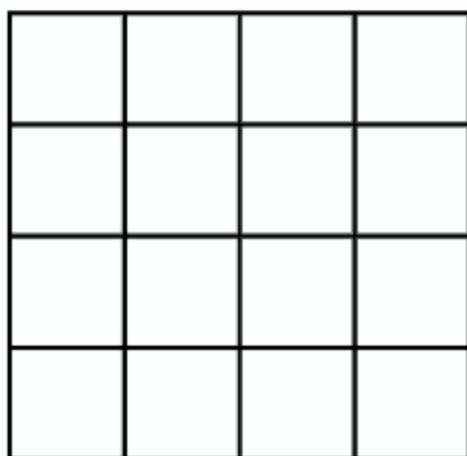During a training session, the coach presents a 4x4 grid and asks the players to count how many squares they see. Some players quickly respond with 16, only seeing the small individual squares. Others, after looking more carefully, identify larger squares formed by the combination of smaller ones. Even though each player sees a different number of squares, the coach highlights an important lesson: it's not crucial for everyone to see all the squares, but it's essential that they agree on a minimum number of squares that are non-negotiable for the team's success.

Relationship between objectives and motivation:
The establishment of effective objectives is fundamental for the motivation of athletes. Objectives provide a sense of direction and a marker of progress, which is crucial for maintaining motivation throughout the season. We must ensure that the objectives are challenging yet achievable, avoiding setting goals so high that they become demotivating or so low that they do not provide enough challenge.

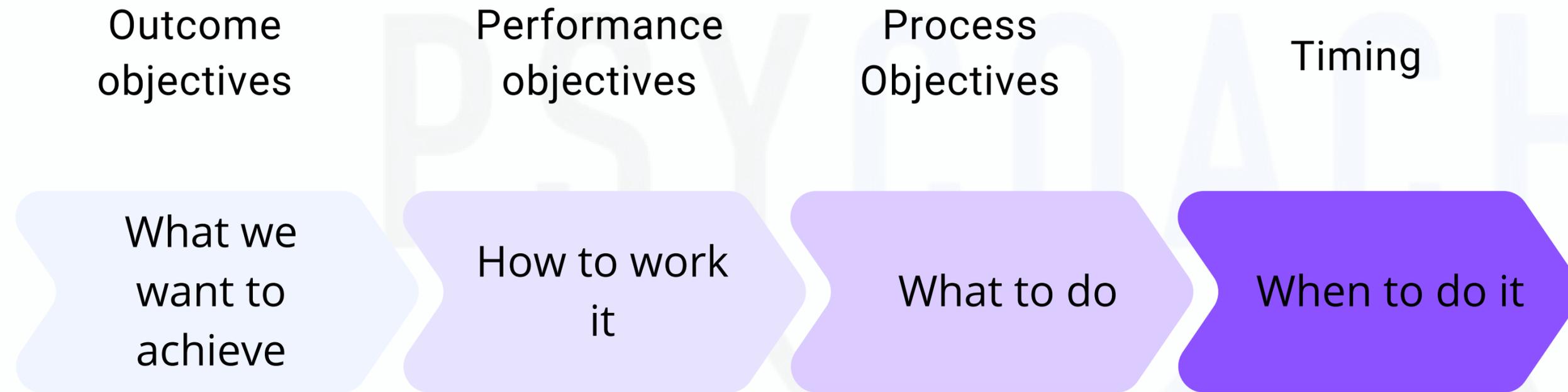**Adaptability and flexibility in planning:**
Sports planning also requires adaptability. *Ana regularly reviews and adjusts her planning based on the athletes' progress, changing circumstances, and feedback from the athlets*. This flexibility ensures that the planning remains relevant and effective, and shows the athletes that their training is dynamic and responsive to their developing needs.

133

M-4

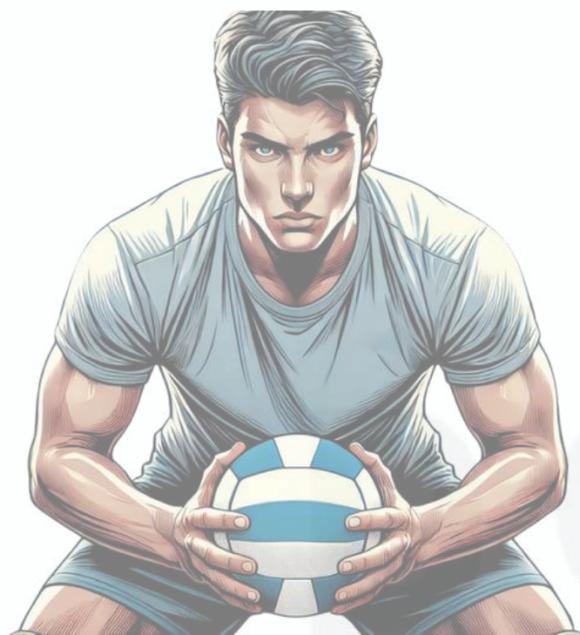As coaches, we need to know not only how to set objectives and structure training sessions but also have the ability to adapt to the individual needs and strengths of each athlete while maintaining clear general objectives.

| Outcome objectives	Performance objectives	Process Objectives	Timing
What we want to achieve	How to work it	What to do	When to do it

134

Importance of individualized planning

If we are clear that, as we saw in Module 1, each athlete is unique, with different ways of thinking, different abilities, and goals, it will be logical to adopt a personalized approach in our planning. This method not only addresses the specific needs of each athlete but also contributes to their personal motivation.

Feeling that their individual objectives are recognized and valued, athletes feel more committed and motivated to achieve their goals.

What I Did Well + What Can I Improve

There is always room for improvement.

WDW? + WCI?
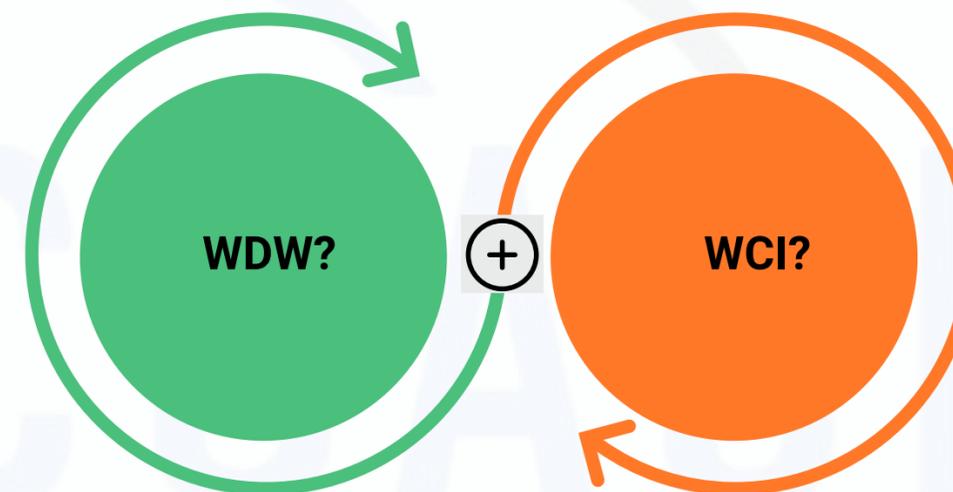
This model encourages athletes to self-evaluate effectively by focusing first on what they've done well, followed by identifying areas for improvement. The key idea is to shift from the common habit of asking, "What did I do wrong?" to a more constructive question, "What can I improve?" This approach fosters a positive mindset, helping athletes recognize their strengths while promoting growth. Instead of dwelling on mistakes, they learn to focus on progress and development, building confidence and resilience.

- **Objectives Drive Motivation**: Setting clear, challenging, yet achievable objectives is essential to keep athletes motivated and focused.
- **Adaptability in Planning:** Plans should be flexible, adapting to the individual progress of athletes, changing circumstances, and feedback.
- **Individualized Planning Matters:** Each athlete has unique abilities and goals.
- **Challenging but Achievable Goals:** Balance is key when setting objectives. Goals should push athletes without overwhelming them, ensuring growth without demotivation.
- **Regular Review and Adjustment:** Constantly review training plans and objectives to ensure alignment with the athletes' current abilities and progress.

- **Personal Objective Review:** Set up one-on-one meetings with each athlete to review their individual goals and discuss how these goals align with the team's objectives. Make sure the goals are challenging yet achievable.
- **Feedback Integration:** After training sessions, gather feedback from athletes on their progress and how they feel about the current training approach. Use this information to refine objectives and planning for the next session.

136

M-4

Luis, a vollleyball coach, faces the challenge of improving the team's tactical execution. At the beginning of each training session, he clearly explains the objectives of the day's activities, ensuring that they are understandable, measurable, and directly related to the players' efforts. His positive and specific approach increases clarity, commitment, and the players' confidence in their abilities.

Introduction:

In this chapter, we will explore how a well-structured task presentation within the Replicable Communication Pattern (RCP) sets the foundation for efficient training sessions. Coaches will learn how to translate planning into action with clear and empowering communication.

138

M-4

Objective:

- Understand the Replicable Communication Pattern (RCP) and its phases.
- Improve coaches' techniques for presenting tasks and objectives in a positive and effective manner.
- Increase the team's focus, cohesion, and self-efficacy through clear and goal-oriented communication.
- Foster active participation and commitment of players in training by using well-defined task presentations.

Key words

#GoalSetting
#TaskPresentation
#ActiveCommunication

Chain of awareness model

Planning → Scheduling

Replicable Communicative Pattern

Goal setting
Focus instructions
Correction
Final Feedback

Pre execution / during / post — RCP phases

Awareness → Confidence → Self-efficacy

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139
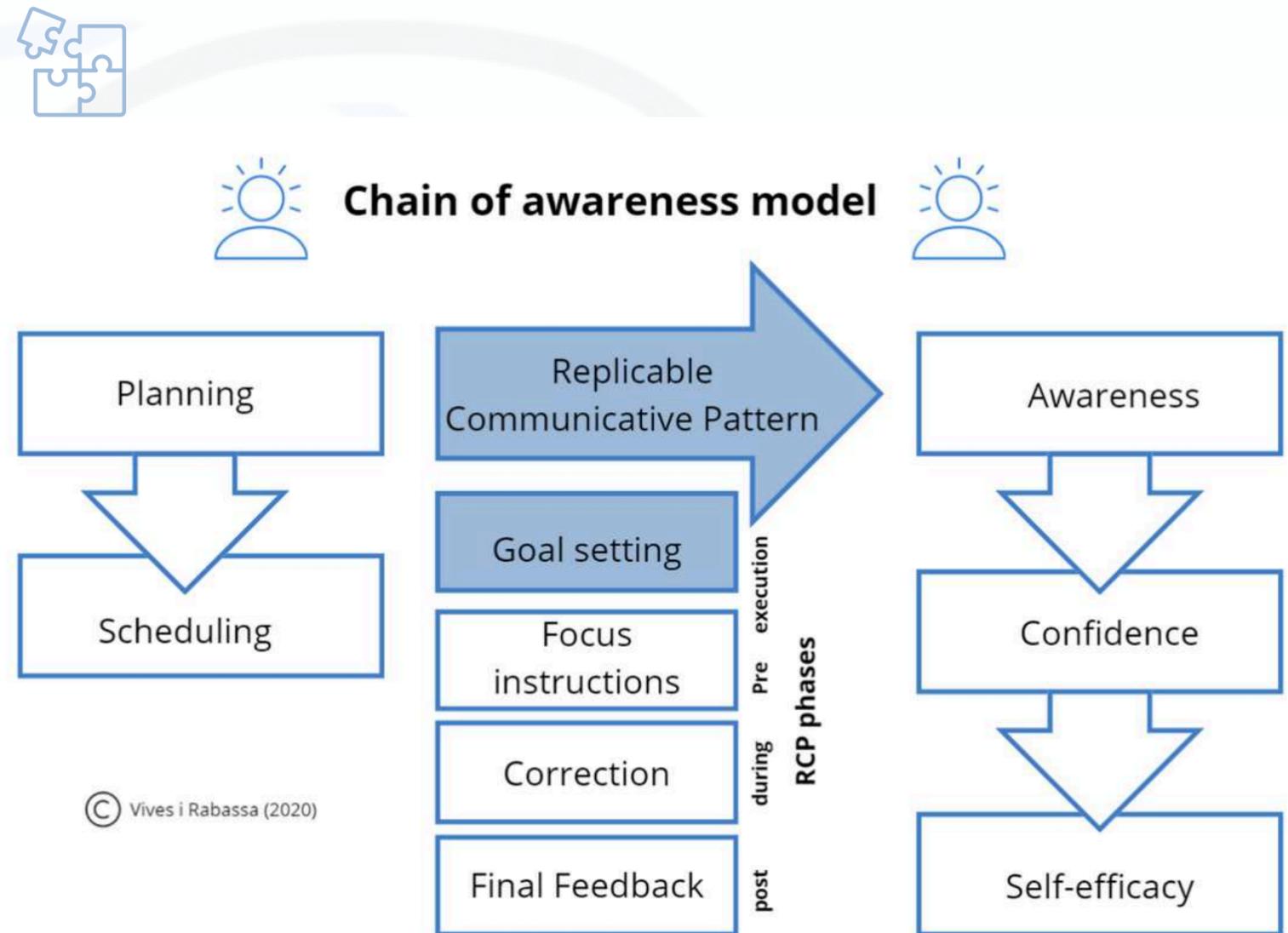
In sports, the way we present tasks and objectives to our players is fundamental for the success of the training. This phase of the RCP is where planning turns into action, and the effectiveness of this conversion largely depends on the coach's ability to communicate clearly and positively what is expected of the players.

Active Communication: The effectiveness of task presentation lies in clarity and positivity. Objectives should be explained in a way that is controllable by the athletes, depending on their effort and work. It is crucial for coaches to avoid focusing on what should be avoided and instead focus on what is to be achieved. This positivity not only clarifies expectations but also fosters a motivating environment.

Clear and positive communication:
- **Clarity:** Tasks must be communicated in a way that the players understand fully. The objectives need to be specific, descriptive, and measurable. For example, instead of saying "improve defense," a better approach would be, "Stay closer to your opponent during transitions."
- **Positivity:** It is essential to focus on what players need to achieve, rather than on what they should avoid. Positive instructions foster a more motivating and supportive environment. For instance, instead of saying, "Don't lose focus," the coach can say, "Keep your eye on the ball throughout the play."

Paraverbal communication:
- **Tone of voice:** How the coach communicates is just as important as what is communicated. A calm, controlled tone will help keep players focused, while an energetic tone can elevate intensity.
- **Cadence and volume:** Adjusting the speed and volume can emphasize urgency or calmness depending on the situation. For example, during high-pressure moments, a slow, calm tone can help players manage stress.

M-4

Chain of awareness mo

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Replicable
Communicative Pattern
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→

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Goal setting
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Focus
instructions
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Correction
```

```
Final Feedback
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Pre execution during post

RCP phases

Goal settings

- In a positive manner (what is to be achieved, not what to avoid)
- Within the athlete's control (dependent on their efforts)
- Specific (descriptive)
- Observable or measurable (allowing for the evaluation of achievement)
- Challenging (a challenge) but achievable.
- Consistent and complementary to other objectives.

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Impact on Team Cohesion:
The way of communicating also influences team cohesion. Using language that includes the whole group and expressions that reinforce the unity of the team can strengthen the sense of belonging. For example, using phrases like "Together we can improve on this" instead of pointing out specific individuals fosters a teamworking environment.

INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY COACHING

141

- Clear and positive task presentation is essential for the effectiveness of training.
- Specific, measurable, and achievable objectives increase motivation and clarity for the players.
- Consistency between daily and overall team objectives strengthens cohesion and self-efficacy.

- **Create specific objectives:** Practice creating clear, specific, and measurable objectives for each training session. Ensure that objectives are phrased in a positive manner.
- **Use paraverbal techniques:** During your next session, consciously adjust your tone, cadence, and volume to suit the exercise and the emotional state of your players.
- **Evaluate task presentation:** After each exercise, have a quick discussion with the team about how they perceived the instructions. Did they feel they understood the objectives? Was there clarity on what was expected?

M-4

In a volleyball training session, the coach uses commands like "high position," "strong block," or "clear communication" to direct and focus the players on critical aspects of the game. These direct and specific instructions facilitate more precise execution and better performance.

Introduction:

This chapter focuses on the coach's ability to provide effective and clear instructions, using key words and communication techniques that generate attention and concentration in athletes. The goal is to explain how these instructions should be connected with action and how they influence key psychological aspects such as motivation and self-efficacy.

144

M-4

Objective:

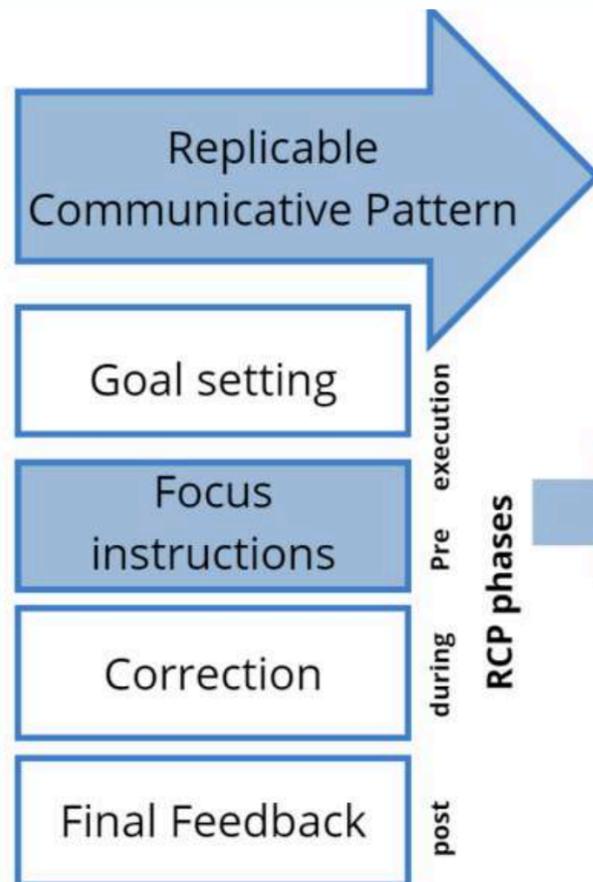- Develop skills to give clear and effective instructions.
- Understand the importance of key words in sports communication.
- Improve the attention and concentration of athletes during training.

Key words

#Intructions
#StructuredFeedback
#Communication

Replicable Communicative Pattern

Goal setting

Focus instructions

Correction

Final Feedback

execution
Pre

during

post

RCP phases

145

M-4

Replicable Communicative Pattern

RCP phases	
Pre execution	Goal setting
	Focus instructions
during	Correction
post	Final Feedback

Focus instructions

- Connected to action, focus (sensations or reference), or the idea to be achieved.
- In a positive manner (what is to be achieved, seen, noticed, etc., not what to avoid)
- Short and phonetically coherent with the action.
- In addition to words, use of onomatopoeia, sequences, gestures...

Impact on Self-Efficacy and performance:

Well-structured and positive instructions help athletes:

- Focus their attention on key aspects of performance, reducing distractions.
- Improve concentration and direct their energy effectively.
- Gain confidence by understanding what is achievable, thereby improving performance and self-efficacy.

146

M4.4- RCP: Focus instructions

- Clear and specific instructions are fundamental to success in sports training.
- The use of key words and complementary techniques (gestures, onomatopoeias) improves athletes' focus and concentration.
- Effective communication, when combined with sports psychology principles, boosts self-efficacy and performance.

- **Develop effective instructions:** Practice creating concise and positive key words for specific actions during training. Ensure the language used is phonetically simple and easy to follow under pressure.
- **Use complementary communication techniques:** Employ gestures, sounds, or visual cues to reinforce instructions and help athletes better understand and execute actions.
- **Evaluate communication effectiveness:** Ask athletes to identify which key words or instructions were most useful during training and how these impacted their performance.

During a volleyball training session, the coach notices that one of the middle blockers is frequently out of position during defensive plays. The coach uses phrases like "strong block" or "quick footwork" not only during the initial instruction but also during corrections. These reminders help the player relate the correction to the desired action and improve her response time and positioning in the next drills.
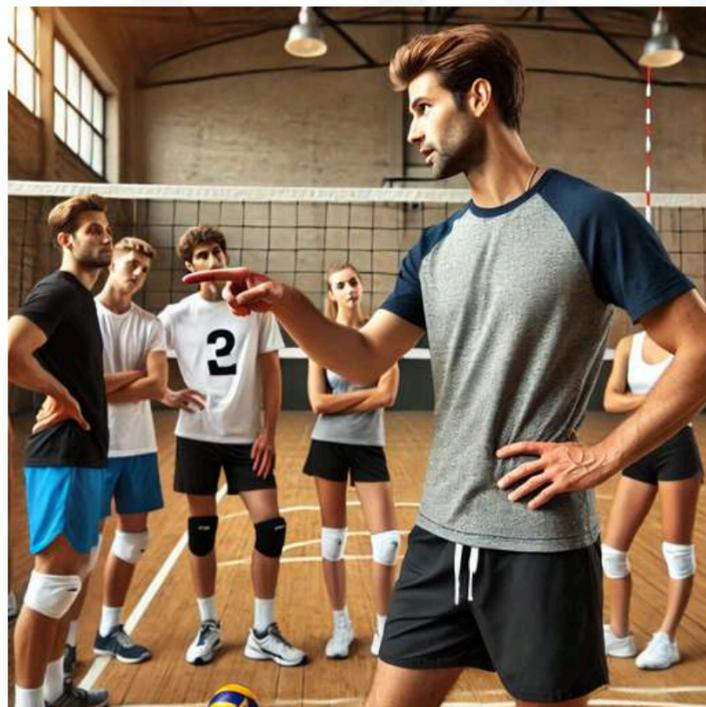
Introduction:

Chapter 5 focuses on "Generating Awareness" through effective techniques of correction, reinforcement, and suggestions for improvement. The aim is to help coaches foster deeper and more conscious learning in athletes, using strategies such as linking corrections to set objectives, using key phrases, reinforcing correct actions, and effective modeling.

M-4

Objective:

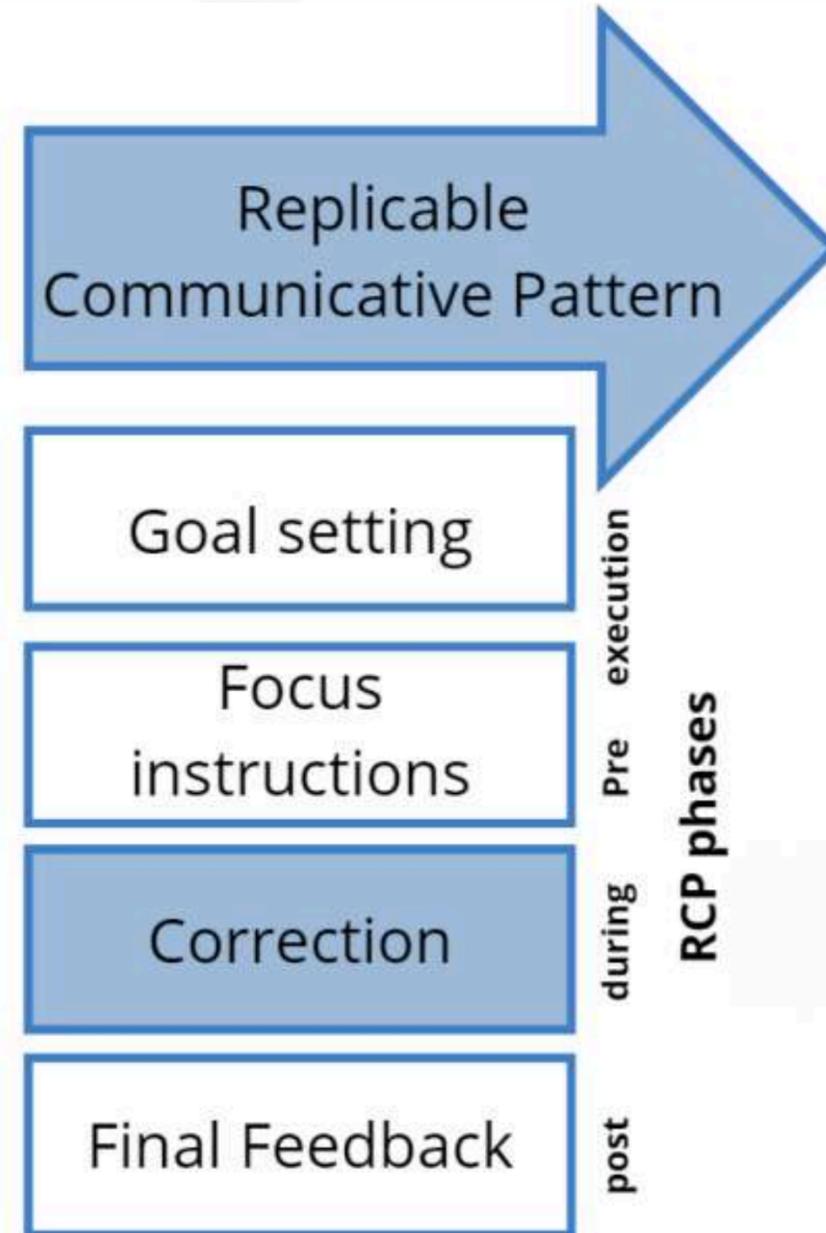- Develop skills for making effective and constructive corrections.
- Use reinforcement and key phrases as tools to improve concentration and learning.
- Promote guided discovery and modeling in training.

Key words

#ConstructiveCorrection
#PositiveReinforcement
#GuidedDiscovery

Replicable Communicative Pattern

Goal setting

Focus instructions

Correction

Final Feedback

Pre execution / during / post

RCP phases

150

M-4

Generating awareness in athletes is a key aspect of effective training. It's not just about correcting errors but doing so in a way that promotes understanding, self-learning, and continuous improvement.

Corrections related to objectives:
Corrections should always be connected to the specific objectives of the training. This helps volleyball players understand not only what needs to be corrected but also why it matters. For example, if the goal is to improve blocking during defense, corrections should focus on the player's hand position or timing at the net. Instead of just saying, "That block was off," the coach might say, "Focus on timing your jump with the hitter's attack to get a stronger block." This way, the correction aligns with the session's objective.

Use of key words
Key words can act as reminders for players during corrections. For instance, in volleyball, when working on positioning, the coach might use the words "low and ready" to remind players of their defensive stance during a rally. This simple word acts as a mental cue for the players, helping them execute the action more effectively. Additionally, during serving practice, a words like "quick release" can encourage players to focus on faster arm movements for a stronger serve.

"Focus!"

ok, focused on ball movement and ready to jump

M-4
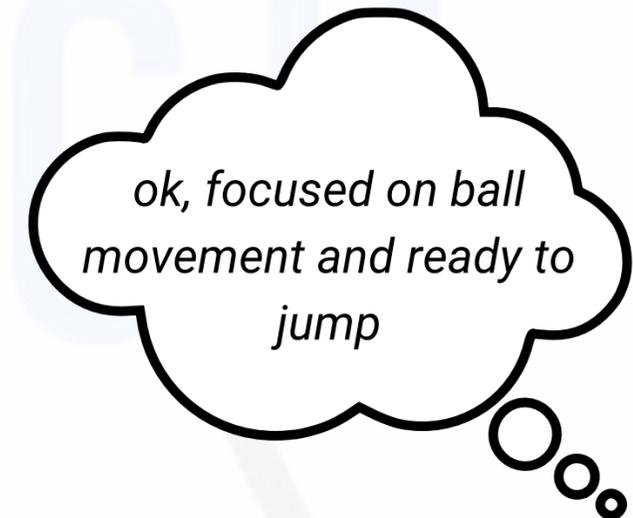
Reinforcing correct actions:

It's essential to reinforce what players do right in addition to correcting mistakes. For example, if a player adjusts their blocking position effectively after receiving feedback, the coach can positively reinforce this by saying, "Great adjustment on that block, now keep that timing!" Positive reinforcement encourages players to keep improving and builds their confidence, especially when combined with constructive feedback.

Guided discovery and modeling:

In volleyball, guided discovery can involve asking players to reflect on their performance and come up with their own solutions. For instance, the coach might ask, "What adjustment could you make to improve your serve reception?" This question encourages players to think critically about their actions and find ways to improve. Modeling can also play a role; for example, the coach could demonstrate the proper footwork for transitioning from defense to offense, or show a video clip of successful transitions during a game.
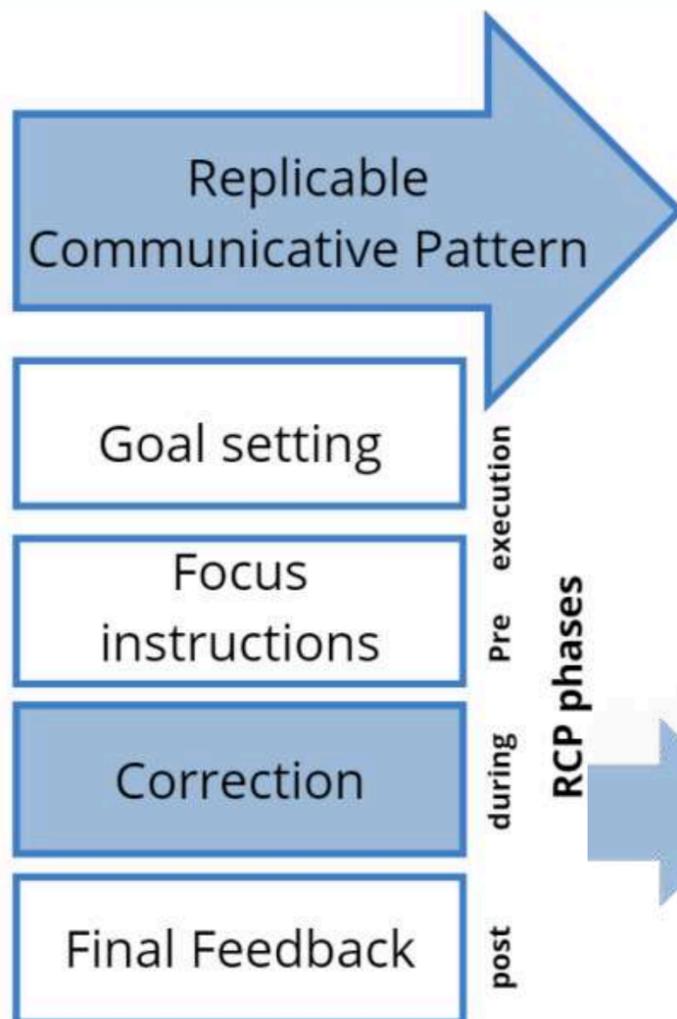
Great job blocking timing Alex!

How do we defend him?

M-4

Replicable Communicative Pattern

Goal setting

Focus instructions

Correction

Final Feedback

Pre execution

during

post

RCP phases

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corrections
- Relate them to the stated objective.
- Use keywords (concentration) as a warning or reminder.
- State what needs to be done (not just what was done wrong).
- Reinforce successes, especially after correction (sandwich technique).
- Use guided discovery. Use modeling through gestures.

Psychological impact of correction and reinforcement:
The manner in which corrections and reinforcements are delivered can significantly impact a player's mindset. For instance, instead of simply pointing out an error like a missed dig, the coach could say, "You were in a good position, now just keep your arms lower and stay more grounded." This approach emphasizes improvement rather than failure, fostering a growth mindset.

153

M-4

- Corrections should be specific, related to objectives, and presented in a constructive manner.
- Effective use of keywords and positive reinforcement is essential for improving concentration and learning.
- Techniques like guided discovery and modeling are fundamental for fostering self-learning and understanding.

- **Positive reinforcement:** After each correction, reinforce the athlete's strengths and what they did well.
- **Guided discovery:** Ask reflective questions to guide athletes toward finding their own solutions.
- **Task:** Design a training session that integrates corrections, key phrases, and positive reinforcement. Observe how these techniques influence athlete performance and engagement.

154

At the end of a handball training session, the coach gathers the team to discuss the objectives achieved. They use notes and scores to assess the achievement of these goals, fostering participation and dialogue among the players. This allows the players to reflect on how their concentration and learned techniques contributed to their success.

Introduction:

This chapter addresses the final phase of the Replicable Communicative Pattern (PRC): the final feedback. It focuses on how this feedback can integrate everything learned, evaluate what was achieved and how it was accomplished, to generate conscious learning and reinforce the confidence and self-efficacy of the athletes.
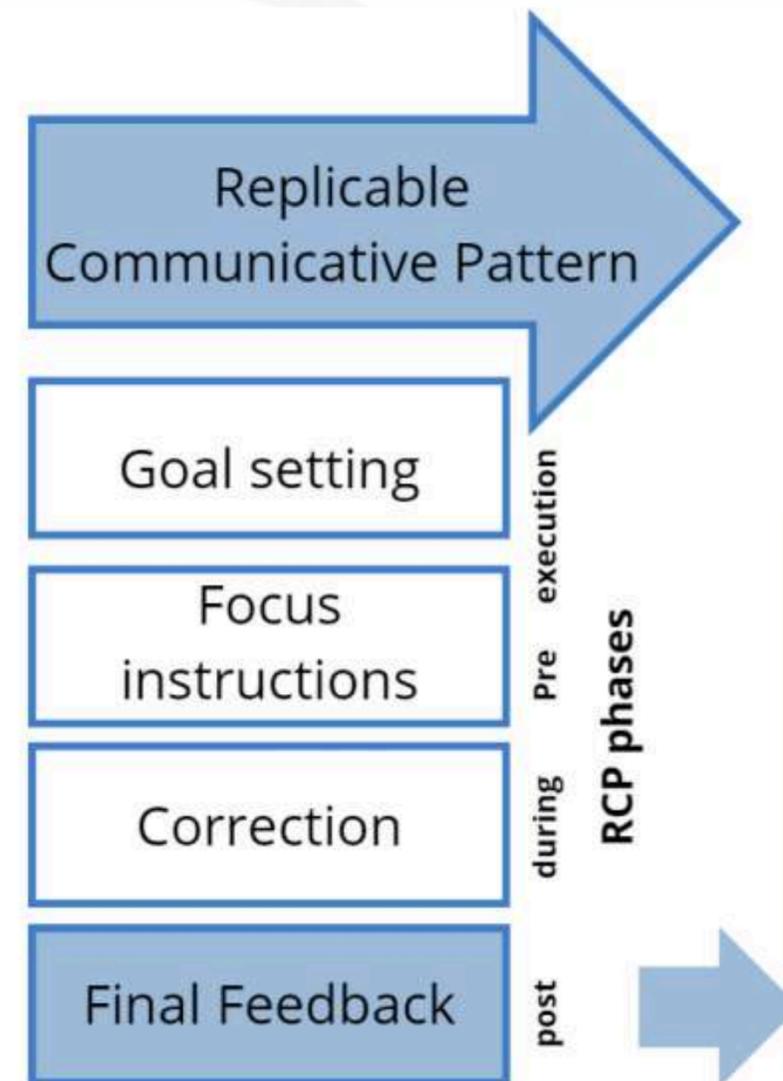
M-4

Objective:

- · Integrate and consolidate the athletes' learning through effective final feedback.
- · Promote open dialogue and active participation of the athletes in the feedback process.
- · Evaluate and assess achievements in relation to the established objectives, reinforcing confidence and self-efficacy.

Key words

#Feedback
#Assessment
#Awareness

157

Final feedback is critical for closing the loop in a training session. It not only helps athletes reflect on their performance but also reinforces what was learned.

Relationship with objectives: Feedback must directly relate to the objectives of the training session. For example, if the goal was to improve blocking in volleyball, corrections and evaluations should focus on how well athletes positioned themselves and reacted during the drill.
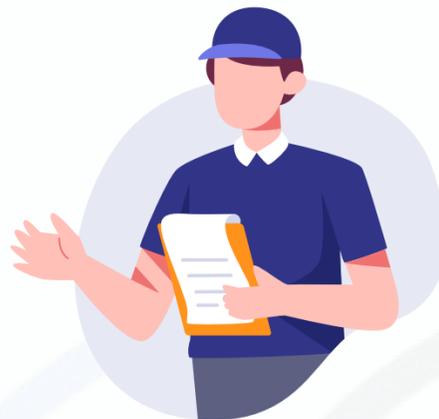
Promote dialogue and participation: Encouraging open dialogue helps players reflect on their own performance and promotes team cohesion. Coaches should create an environment where players feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. For example, the coach can ask, "How did you feel about your positioning during the blocks today?" to invite reflection.

Assessment of goal achievement: Using clear metrics, such as ratings from 1 to 10, can help both coach and athletes assess performance in a tangible way. For instance, after a training session focusing on serves, players can rate their serve consistency and discuss how they felt about the improvements they made.
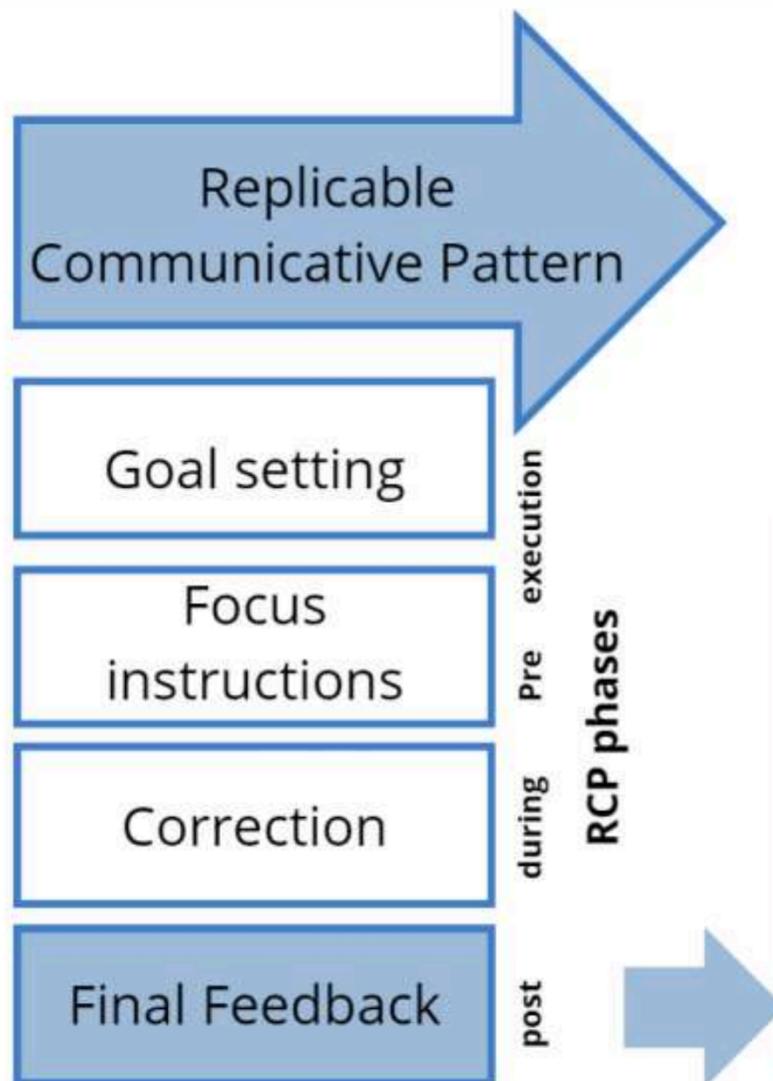
Generating awareness and confidence: Effective feedback builds athletes' self-awareness. By discussing what went well and what can be improved, coaches reinforce athletes' understanding of their strengths and areas for growth, increasing their confidence in future sessions.

Replicable Communicative Pattern

Goal setting

Focus instructions

Correction

Final Feedback

Pre execution

during

post

RCP phases

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Final feedback
- Related to the objective, instructions, and corrections.
- Promote dialogue and participation of the athletes.
- Evaluate the achievement of the objective (for example, through ratings from 1-10) and reach a consensus with the athletes.
- Raise awareness of achievements based on the concentration used.

Common problems and solutions in feedback:

- **Lack of understanding of objectives:** Clarify and specify the objectives.

- **Difficulty in maintaining focus:** Use keywords and visual cues to remind athletes of the objectives during training.

- **Lack of motivation:** Set achievable goals to maintain momentum.

- **Stress and anxiety:** Incorporate relaxation and visualization techniques before important games to calm nerves.

159

- Effective final feedback integrates learning and reinforces self-efficacy.
- Active participation in feedback promotes conscious learning and team cohesion.
- The assessment of goals should be consistent and motivational, enhancing confidence.

- **Interactive feedback sessions:** Conduct feedback sessions where athletes can share their reflections on their performance.
- **Agreed assesments methods:** Establish evaluation systems that the team agrees upon, ensuring fair and motivating assessments.
- **Promote self-analysis:** Encourage athletes to reflect on what they have learned and how they can apply it to their development.
- **Task:** Design an interactive feedback session that includes self-assessment, group discussions, and goal setting for the next training session.

160

PSYCOACH

M5.1

Inclusion in sports

Giving inclusion a chance

Carlos, a volleyball coach, aims to promote inclusive sports in his club. He is determined to implement actions that foster inclusion in the team. However, during training, he quickly realizes the challenges ahead. If it's already difficult for his team to accept players with a "lower" level of skill, imagine how challenging it will be to instill values that embrace those who are "different."

Introduction:

Reaching this point signifies that as coaches, we have worked through psychological strategies, personal development, and communicative skills, preparing us to create inclusive spaces in sports. We are now equipped to embrace diversity in its many forms—addressing physical and emotional needs, promoting gender inclusion, and preventing discrimination. Inclusion is essential for the development of fair sports environments, where individuals can grow, participate, and feel respected, regardless of their background or abilities.

Inclusion in sports reflects the diversity present in society. As supported by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), non-discrimination and gender equality are fundamental pillars in promoting inclusion in sports. Implementing an inclusive program requires understanding the synergy between the club's current structure and the broader needs for diversity.

M-5

Objective:

- Understand the value of diversity in sports teams.
- Promote an inclusive approach in terms of gender, abilities, and accessibility.
- Foster a respectful, discrimination-free team environment.
- Equip coaches with tools to create an inclusive, accessible, and motivating environment for everyone.

Key words
#Inclusion
#TeamCohesion
#DiversityAwareness

Inclusion must encompass not just physical differences but also cultural, emotional, and gender diversity. This holistic approach ensures all team members feel valued and improves both team dynamics and individual performance.

Types of inclusion in sports

- **Social inclusion:** Create spaces where different abilities or skills don't limit participation. Social inclusion benefits individuals and strengthens team cohesion.
- **Gender inclusion:** Ensure equal opportunities for all genders, setting individual goals based on each player's capabilities and respecting gender identities.
- **Physical inclusion:** Provide accessible sports facilities and adapt programs for different skill levels.
- **Emotional inclusion:** Foster an environment where team members feel they can express their emotions and concerns without judgment.

Diversity and gender inclusion
- Implementing policies: Ensure that every team member has equal opportunities, including fair distribution of resources and access to training and competition.
- Inclusive language: Use terms that promote respect and inclusion, avoiding words or expressions that reinforce stereotypes.

Prevention of discrimination
- Respectful environment: Create a space where every team member feels safe, and differences are celebrated as part of personal and group growth.
- Anti-discrimination training: Organize activities and discussions for players to learn to identify and prevent discriminatory behaviors.

Benefits of inclusion in competition
- Fostering equitable participation in sports competitions helps change perceptions and stereotypes. Inclusion breaks down barriers and promotes equal opportunities, emphasizing that skill and effort matter most.

Benefits of inclusion in competition
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Role of the sports psychologist in inclusion
- Having a sports psychologist on staff is key to implementing inclusion programs. Their expertise helps design strategies that support team diversity. If a psychologist isn't available, coaches can still apply evaluation and support techniques.

Balancing Inclusion and team performance
- Inclusion should not lead to overlooking other team members. Coaches must find a balance to ensure every athlete feels valued without compromising team cohesion.

- Inclusion in sports is a broad, comprehensive approach encompassing physical, emotional, cultural, and gender diversity.
- Promoting gender equality and preventing discrimination are key components of an inclusive sports environment.
- A respectful and inclusive sports environment boosts team cohesion and enhances individual performance.

Carlos decides to tackle the situation by actively promoting empathy and understanding within the team. He starts by organizing a team meeting, using real-life examples of successful athletes who overcame challenges thanks to the support and acceptance of their teammates. Then, he sets up mixed-ability drills where players of different skill levels work together, emphasizing that everyone has a role in the team's success. To reinforce inclusivity, Carlos gives specific roles to each player, ensuring everyone feels valued and engaged. Over time, he notices a shift: players show more respect and actively support one another, fostering a stronger and more united team culture.

- **Promote an inclusive environment:** Create practices that foster inclusion and gender equality within teams.
- **Education on diversity and respect:** Conduct workshops on inclusion, covering topics like gender equality, discrimination prevention, and mutual respect.
- **Continuous assessment:** Regularly evaluate your team's inclusive practices and adjust strategies based on feedback.

Task for coaches

- Organize a training session focused on inclusion and diversity with your team. Highlight the importance of respect and gender equality in sports, and foster a discussion about the value of an inclusive environment.

166

PSYCOACH

M5.2

Social inclusion and cultural diversity

Giving inclusion a chance

M-5

M-5

Andrés, a volleyball coach, faces challenges with a young player who just joined the club from another country. The player doesn't understand the language, often misses task instructions, and appears distracted during practice. His father's sideline instructions disrupt the training structure, and the player seems withdrawn and hesitant to engage.

Introduction:

In this chapter, we explore how diversity and inclusion enrich a sports team. Embracing cultural diversity can strengthen creativity, team cohesion, and effective problem-solving within the group. Creating an inclusive environment involves open communication and active listening, which fosters mutual respect and a sense of belonging.

M-5

Objective:

- Empower athletes from diverse backgrounds to build interpersonal connections within the team.
- Equip coaches with strategies to create an inclusive training environment.
- Foster a supportive team atmosphere that respects and values cultural diversity.

Key words

#Inclusion
#Respect
#CulturalAwareness

Building an inclusive team environment requires intentional strategies. Coaches play a key role in creating spaces where cultural diversity is respected and valued. Here's how to promote inclusion:

Education & awareness:
Coaches and club staff benefit from ongoing training in cultural sensitivity and inclusion. Regular workshops on open communication and integration help coaches recognize unique needs, encouraging zero tolerance for discrimination. This training aligns with the Chain of Awareness model, where coaches become more conscious of each player's unique strengths and needs, guiding tailored feedback and building mutual respect.

Active participation:
Encourage each player to share their views, abilities, and concerns during practice. Use inclusive language to make everyone feel they belong. Emphasize positive communication and openness—core aspects of the Chain of Awareness reinforcing players' understanding of how their actions impact the team.

169

Setting common goals:
Work together with players and staff to define objectives that serve everyone on the team. Setting shared goals helps unite diverse players around a common purpose, supporting both individual and collective growth.

Recognition and reinforcement:
Celebrate individual and team achievements, regardless of scale, to boost morale. The Chain of Awareness model here reinforces self-efficacy by acknowledging progress and fostering self-belief, especially for athletes new to the environment.

Conflict resolution:
View conflicts as opportunities for improvement. When addressing disagreements, maintain a solution-focused mindset, ensuring players feel heard and valued, supporting an inclusive, growth-oriented team environment.

Engage the audience
Understand me

Treat me as an individual
- Talk to me, ask me what I want
- Show me trust and understanding
- Provide support and help (if I need it)
- Respect my culture and religion
- Focus on what I can do, not what I can't
- Help me have fun and enjoy activity
- Ask for my feedback and ideas

Respect my values
- Explore my values and motivations
- Fit into my routine and lifestyle
- Adapt activity to make it work for everyone
- Show me how activity can benefit my friendships, family, health, mental strength, wellbeing and personal progression

Learn my life story
- Things change, keep talking to me
- Let me share my ideas and goals
- Inspire me with role models
- Learn, improve and evolve

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170

M-5

- Inclusive sports training enhances creativity, team cohesion, and problem-solving.

- Cultural diversity adds value; respectful communication and open participation are essential.

- Common goals and shared achievements foster team unity and self-confidence.

Andrés gradually integrates the new player by pairing him with a teammate who can help translate and model exercises. He speaks directly to the player using simple phrases and positive feedback, building rapport and understanding through conscious communication. The father's interruptions are addressed with understanding, involving him in reinforcing key training messages to support his child's integration.

- **Develop an inclusion decalogue**
Create a values-based decalogue (a set of guiding principles) for coaches and players, outlining behaviors that promote inclusion, such as respect, teamwork, and valuing each other's perspectives.

- **Highlight role models**
Share stories of successful athletes from diverse backgrounds who have made significant contributions to their sport and community. This can be from within the club or other renowned athletes, emphasizing their achievements and values.

- **Applying the "Chain of awareness model":**
Apply conscious communication with the new player, offering brief, clear instructions, eye contact, and positive reinforcement. Gradually involve them in goal-setting discussions to boost their self-efficacy and comfort.

171

PSYCOACH

M5.3

**Giving inclusion a chance**

Challenges and needs for building an inclusive sports environment

M-5

M-5

Juan, a head coach at a community sports club, wants to make his team environment more inclusive. Despite his strong intentions, he quickly faces several barriers. He lacks the funding for accessible equipment, struggles to get buy-in from senior management, and realizes that he and his staff need additional training to effectively support athletes from diverse backgrounds.
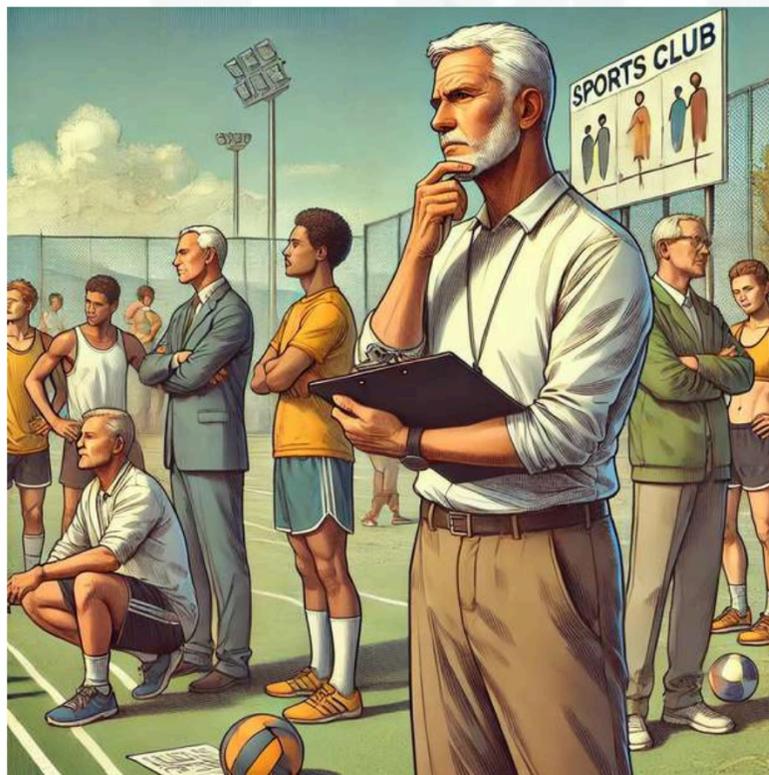
Introduction:

Creating an inclusive sports environment is a journey that requires clear strategies, support, and awareness of the diverse challenges clubs often face. This chapter explores common barriers clubs encounter in building inclusivity and identifies what is needed to foster an environment where all athletes can thrive. Understanding these needs and overcoming these challenges equips coaches with a practical foundation, not only in inclusivity but also in aligning with broader social goals.

M-5

Objective:

- Identify the primary barriers faced by sports clubs when fostering inclusive environments.
- Understand the economic, political, and social factors that impact the implementation of inclusive practices.
- Highlight the key training needs and values coaches must adopt to support inclusivity.

Key words

#InclusionBarriers
#ResourceAllocation

Economic and financial barriers

- Limited Funding for Accessibility: Clubs often lack the budget needed for inclusive equipment, training, or adapting spaces to accommodate individuals with physical challenges. Financial limitations can be a major obstacle, especially for smaller or community-based clubs.
- Strategies: Securing sponsorships or applying for grants that specifically support inclusive initiatives can help offset these costs. Prioritizing incremental investments in accessible infrastructure can make a meaningful impact over time.

Policy and institutional challenges

- Lack of Institutional Support: Without backing from club leadership, inclusive initiatives often lack sustainability. Sometimes, policies do not explicitly promote inclusivity, making it difficult for coaches and staff to prioritize these practices.
- Strategies: Creating internal policies that support inclusivity, backed by the club's management, is essential. Clubs can use case studies to demonstrate how inclusivity improves team cohesion and performance, gaining support from key stakeholders.

174

M-5

Training and development needs for coaches

- **Need for inclusive coaching skills:** Many coaches may not have had the opportunity to develop skills around inclusivity or cultural sensitivity. Training in inclusive coaching techniques, effective communication, and adaptive approaches is essential for creating a welcoming atmosphere.

- **Application of previous modules:** Skills from Modules 3 and 4, focusing on communication and the Chain of Awareness, are fundamental in building inclusive coaching methods. Techniques such as effective task presentation, active listening, and guided discovery can support diverse athlete needs.

- **Strategy:** Clubs can organize regular workshops on cultural competence, adaptive training methods, and inclusive communication to equip coaches with tools to meet diverse needs.

Values and attitudes essential for inclusion

- **Empathy and open-mindedness:** Coaches must foster values that promote a genuine appreciation for diversity. Empathy, patience, and a willingness to adapt are crucial for building trust and acceptance among team members.

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- **Strategies:** coaches can integrate empathy-building activities during team practices. Discussions on respect, group exercises emphasizing each player's unique contribution, and celebrating small victories can strengthen team bonds.

175

M-5

Environmental and structural limitations

- **Physical space adaptations:** Many facilities are not designed with accessibility in mind. Limited ramps, narrow spaces, or inadequate restrooms can discourage athletes with physical disabilities from participating fully.

- **Strategy:** clubs should assess their facilities and identify ways to make physical spaces more inclusive, even if it means small adjustments. Clubs with restricted budgets can reach out to local organizations specializing in accessibility for advice and resources.

Time constraints and balancing performance goals

- **Balancing inclusion with Competitive Goals:** Coaches often face the challenge of maintaining high-performance standards while supporting inclusivity. This balance requires thoughtful integration of training methods that benefit all athletes.

- **Strategy:** Encouraging an individualized approach to goal setting, as discussed in Module 2, can help each athlete progress based on their unique strengths. Coaches can set dual goals, emphasizing both performance and personal growth, to ensure inclusive values align with team achievements.

176

M-5

- Inclusive coaching requires adaptability and a proactive approach to learning.
- Financial and policy support is necessary for sustainable inclusivity efforts.
- Empathy and open-mindedness are the core values that enable inclusion, alongside a willingness to adjust and learn.

- **Task 1:** Host a roundtable discussion with coaches, athletes, and club staff to openly discuss specific barriers to inclusivity at your club. This dialogue fosters awareness and helps identify achievable first steps toward inclusion.
- **Task 2:** Create a resource wish list for inclusivity in your club. Identify possible funding sources (e.g., local grants, sponsorships) to bridge resource gaps.
- **Task 3:** Plan a workshop that includes case studies on inclusive practices. Encourage coaches to share their experiences and collectively brainstorm methods to overcome common barriers.

177

Noa, a non-binary youth, feels constrained by the sports federation's gender-specific categories and faces challenges in areas like locker room use, which are not yet equipped for gender diversity. Their teammates struggle to understand Noa's identity, adding an emotional layer to Noa's experience in the team.

Introduction:

In early sports experiences, children participate without much focus on gender differences, yet as athletes grow, traditional gender norms often emerge, which can feel restrictive for some. Young athletes who identify as transgender or gender diverse may feel disconnected from their assigned gender, and some may experience significant discomfort, known as gender dysphoria. This chapter emphasizes that being transgender or gender diverse is not a disorder, and sports environments should actively support athletes in ways that reduce mental health risks, including anxiety and depression, associated with exclusion or lack of understanding.

M5.4- Inclusive environments and gender identity

M-5

Objective:

- Recognize the challenges faced by gender-diverse athletes within sports teams and clubs.
- Implement strategies to create inclusive spaces that respect and affirm all gender identities.
- Understand the importance of communication and supportive practices in promoting gender inclusivity.

Key words

#GenderInclusion
#Respect and Diversity
#SupportiveEnvironments

Identifying and understanding gender diversity needs

- Coaches play a vital role in providing safe spaces for conversations. Through initial parent interviews (as introduced in Module 4), coaches can gain insight into any unique needs related to a minor's gender identity, setting a respectful tone for the season. Coaches should be open, supportive, and, if necessary, adapt training environments to meet these needs.

Implementing tailored programs

- Once a minor's needs are understood, a season-long, adaptable program can be developed. This might include regular check-ins and practical adjustments to ensure all athletes feel accepted. The Chain of Awareness model, highlighted in Module 4, can serve as a structured approach for feedback and communication, allowing ongoing evaluation and adjustment of the program to support both the individual and the team.

180

M-5

Role models and representation
- By connecting younger athletes with gender-diverse role models within the club, coaches can foster inclusion and representation. Role models might include technical staff, senior players, or coaches themselves, all of whom can offer insights and guidance that resonate with younger players.

External support networks
- Coaches should also seek partnerships with local LGBTQ+ support groups, equality advisors, or municipal resources that offer valuable advice and resources for navigating gender diversity in sports. These connections provide insights into current legislation and best practices that support inclusivity and equity.

Regular evaluation and adaptation
- Building inclusive environments is a continuous process. Regular feedback from athletes, parents, and other staff will help to adjust and improve inclusion strategies over time. Coaches are encouraged to conduct evaluations to enhance and evolve the program each season.

TRANSVERSAL TOPICS

There are eight transversal topics to consider when developing actions.

- **Gender mainstreaming:** all stakeholders must integrate a gender perspective into their actions.
- **Intersectionality:** overlaps between causes of inequality make an intersectional approach essential.
- **Gender budgeting/funding:** sports organisations must dedicate budgets to gender equality.
- **Policy monitoring and evaluation, research:** to make sure that policy remains up to date and fit for purpose.
- **Education:** educational tools are vital to explain the importance of gender equality policies and should be addressed to all strategic stakeholders.
- **Communication:** crucial to ensure the report's use as a reference document for policy implementation.
- **Coordinators for gender equality:** will ensure that equality strategies are duly implemented and monitored.
- **Men as allies:** men in decision-making positions must be engaged to create change.

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European Commission

181

M-5

- Recognize and support all LGBTQ+ identities within sports.
- Utilize tools from previous modules to adapt training inclusively.
- Establish and maintain respectful, open communication about gender identity.

- **Conduct initial interviews with parents**

Use this opportunity to clarify expectations, needs, and approaches with parents and guardians, setting a collaborative foundation for the season.

- **Provide emotional support**

Be observant and responsive to each minor's individual needs, showing empathy and understanding.

- **Incorporate role models**

Highlight diverse individuals within the club to serve as relatable figures and to promote an inclusive culture.

- **Respect privacy**

Be mindful of each athlete's privacy regarding their gender identity, especially if the family prefers discretion.

- **Foster open communication**

Use techniques from Module 4 to encourage honest, respectful dialogue within the team.

182

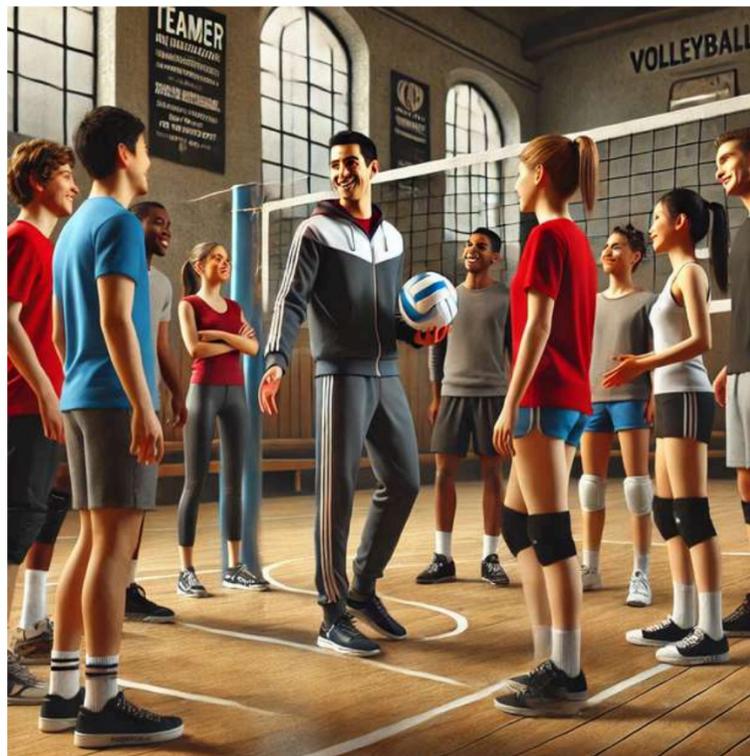# PSYCOACH

M5.5

The coach's role in inclusion

Giving inclusion a chance

M-5

M-5

In a volleyball team, the coach faces the challenge of integrating players with varied skill levels and experiences. Their role is pivotal in creating an environment where every player feels valued and motivated to engage. This requires adapting training strategies, fostering collaboration and empathy among the players, and offering emotional support to help overcome challenges. The coach is at the forefront of promoting inclusion and comprehensive sports development for all.

Introduction:

Throughout this guide, we've explored essential elements in sports coaching: understanding athletes, recognizing psychological variables, effective communication, and practical applications through the Chain of Awareness. Now, we connect these threads to underline the coach's role as an inclusive leader. The coach must embody the principles of positive communication and conscious training to build an environment where diversity is celebrated, and every athlete thrives. Drawing from positive psychology and leadership theories, this final chapter aims to empower coaches with leadership skills that emphasize inclusion, motivation, and cohesive team dynamics.

M-5

Objective:

- Recognize the key influence of coaches in fostering inclusive sports environments.
- Equip coaches with leadership strategies that incorporate positive communication and conscious training techniques.
- Integrate learnings from previous modules to strengthen inclusive leadership.

Key words

#GenderInclusion
#Respect and Diversity
#SupportiveEnvironments

Coaching leadership is multifaceted, encompassing decision-making, motivation, feedback, and relationship-building. An inclusive leader understands and nurtures each athlete's potential, promoting a sense of belonging and commitment to the team's goals. Here, the principles of the Chain of Awareness come into play, guiding the coach to create conscious, supportive, and development-focused training sessions.

1. The basis of inclusive leadership
   - **Positive leadership approach:** Inspired by Seligman's positive psychology, coaches should focus on their athletes' strengths and abilities, using this as a foundation for building self-efficacy and trust.

   - **Communication and inclusion:** As emphasized in Module 3, how a coach communicates is as important as what they communicate. Inclusive communication—using positive feedback, active listening, and empathetic guidance—reinforces an environment of respect and understanding.
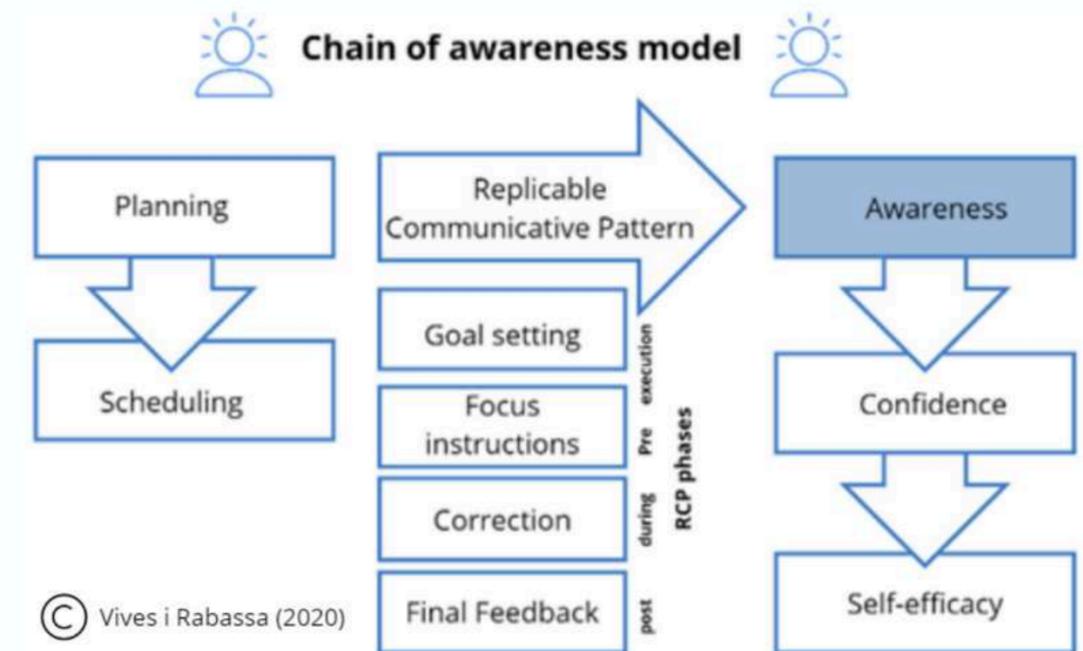
Integrating the chain of awareness

- Coaches can draw on the Chain of Awareness model to integrate mindful, goal-oriented communication that promotes self-reflection and empowerment. This approach supports athletes in recognizing their progress and contributions to the team.

- Task presentation and guidance: Clearly presenting tasks and guiding players through them with encouragement and reinforcement (Module 4) cultivates an inclusive atmosphere where each athlete feels supported, irrespective of their background or skill level.

Chain of awareness model

Planning → Scheduling

Replicable Communicative Pattern

Goal setting
Focus instructions
Correction
Final Feedback

Pre execution
during RCP phases
post

Awareness → Confidence → Self-efficacy

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M-5

The coach as an agent of change

- As Weinberg and Gould (1996) highlight, leadership involves inspiring and modifying team dynamics. Coaches should:

  - Adapt training strategies: Customize training sessions to address varying levels of ability and ensure inclusivity, using the Chain of Awareness to maintain focus on learning and growth.

  - Foster empathy and collaboration: Encourage team exercises that promote understanding and cooperation, breaking down barriers and enhancing cohesion.

  - Feedback and reinforcement: Provide constructive, supportive feedback that acknowledges individual and collective efforts.

187

M-5

- The coach's leadership role is central to promoting an inclusive and cohesive sports environment.
- Effective communication, reinforced by conscious training strategies, builds trust and supports team unity.
- The Chain of Awareness is a valuable tool for integrating mindful, inclusive coaching practices.

- Organize a team meeting where players discuss their understanding of inclusion and share experiences.
- Implement training drills that mix skill levels, requiring collaboration and mutual support.
- Apply the *chain of awareness* principles by prompting athletes to evaluate their performance and share their thoughts on team goals.

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