



# EXCELLENCE

**2012** An Elite Performance Conference for USSA Clubs 

*Changing the Sport Culture*

## **Integrating Mental Strength Training into Your Club's Programs**

Lester L. Keller, Ph.D.

High Performance Department  
United States Ski and Snowboard Assn.  
Performance Psychology Coordinator  
Western Alpine Development Director



# **Performance Domains, USSA Elite Performance Model**

Technical & tactical by sport, discipline

Physical demands

Mental strength

Equipment & technology

Athlete's program and management

Health and medical history

# Perception/Opinion

1. In snow sport competition, what percentage of the performance do you consider to be due to mental aspects?
2. Of the errors made in sport performance what percentage do you attribute to mental errors?



## Base Question

How much of the training and preparation time in your club's program is spent on the **MENTAL** aspects of performance now?

# USST Study

- Survey of the ABC men and women's team
- 10 point scale
- “Of the very best performers in your sport, how important do you think mental skills are in contributing to their success?”
- 9.6
- How important are mental skills for you in your personal training program?
- 8.4

# **Myths about Sport Psychology**

- “There is something wrong with Johnny and we need to fix him”
- Mental strength is innate; You have it or you don’t.
- Mental training is special; it needs to be done separately from “normal” training
- We don’t have the time or the \$\$



# **USST Recommendations From Sport Education**

“ Tool Skills” = PST

Goal striving

Performance planning

Focus

Arousal regulation and relaxation

Imagery & mental rehearsal

Self concept, image, and efficacy

New Directions: Positivity, Life Skills development, Competitive skills development, Strategic and tactical thinking

# Basics of mental skills

- The Good News is
  - Mental skills do enhance performance
  - They can be learned
  - It is not complex
- Not so good news (for the lazy)
  - It takes as much practice and effort as any other aspect of performance
  - If it was easy \_\_\_\_\_ would \_\_\_\_\_.

# Baseline Considerations

- Assessment
  - Current conditions
  - Objectives & needs
- Scope of integration
  - What
  - How
  - Who is the target audience
  - Expertise: Who will provide the training to who?

# Means of Delivery

- Coaching Staff
  - How do you train the coaches?
- Experts
  - Where do you find them?
  - What are you looking for?
- Materials
  - Sport Education
  - Web
  - Books and video

# Goals for Mental Training

- Integrate into all training
- Account for the mental side of the game all the time
- “Normalize” it. Make it the way you do business
- “Be here now”
- Have a plan
  - Do things on purpose

# Racer Behaviors

- **Composer**
  - Calmness, readiness, enjoyment
- **Focus**
  - Signal vs. Noise
- **Activation**
  - Energy, intensity, warrior mentality
- **Performance**
  - According to purpose and strategy

# Coaching Behaviors

- **Composer**
  - Calmness, readiness, enjoyment
- **Focus**
  - Signal vs. Noise
- **Assistance**
  - Information, communication, expertise
- **Performance**
  - According to purpose and strategy

# Objective

- What is necessary, what are the objectives?

Maximal Performance on  
Demand

# What Really Matters?

- Top attributes of a competent coach?
  - Communication
  - Knowledge or expertise
  - Leadership
  - Inspiration
  - Motivation skills/Passion
  - Fun and Enjoyment
  - Organization/Management
  - Integrity/Responsibility
  - Trust
  - Vision, Innovation, Creativity
  - Ability to teach
  - Experience
  - Welfare of the Children

## These do:

- How communication happens, style over content
- Teaching skills esp. ski technique & competition skills, (so... content)
- Passion for sport
- Account for it all; teach everything
- Employ empathy. It's not about you.
- Lead by example
- Speak the truth
- Seek work