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Case Study 3 - Helping Christy Experience Flow

Promoting Passion. Last season Christy had a basketball game where she was in the zone. Everything she did worked, and her performance was effortless and automatic. Every shot she took went in. She played great defense, including 5 steals because she seemed to know what the other team was going to do before they did it. Finally, she had 11 assists because she saw the floor so well, anticipated what her teammates and opponents would do and stayed calm and poised under pressure. Christy has since found out that she was experiencing Flow, a peak performance experience that has greatly enhanced her passion for basketball. Christy wants to experience Flow again, as often as possible for as long as possible. She has become obsessed with basketball and with trying to experience Flow whenever she practices and competes. It has become the major reason she plays the game.

Answer the following 5 questions about Flow. Explain your rationale for your answers in detail. Your rationale is equally important to your actual response.

1. Review the major characteristics that define Flow for Christy? Explain each one.

Christy experienced a few dimensions of flow when every shot she took went in the basket (scoring was clear feedback that she was performing the skills correctly), she saw the basketball floor so well that she anticipated what her teammates and opponents were going to do (total and complete concentration on the task at hand), and when her performance was effortless and automatic (she was in complete control without trying to be in control) (Williams & Krane, 2015). The factors that helped Christy experience flow were due to an appropriate direction of focus that enabled her to have 11 assists and 5 steals, having optimal arousal levels as she was able to stay calm under pressure, and having task-relevant goals in that she focused on shooting, defending, stealing the ball, and creating assists for her teammates to score (Williams & Krane, 2015).

2. What strategies can Christy use to increase her chances to experience Flow? Why?

Utilizing physiological skills will increase the chances that Christy will experience flow by incorporating imagery, relaxation, and mindfulness into her practices and competitions (Williams & Krane, 2015). Imagery practice of basketball skills can teach Christy to be confident in her abilities, relaxation techniques can create the proper arousal level for play while controlling anxiety levels, and mindfulness can create a present-moment awareness where Christy directs her attention to task-relevant cues by creating an increased sense of control (Williams & Krane, 2015). If Christy is confident in her skills she will trust in her abilities and be able to automatically perform, which is the opposite of trying to force flow to happen (Williams & Krane, 2015). For Christy to understand what emotional states relate to her ideal performances,

she can report after successful and unsuccessful performances and document these emotional patterns into an Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning (IZOF) model to find emotions that are performance enhancing (Williams & Krane, 2015). If Christy learns how to maintain her emotional state by staying in her performance-enhancing zone, she will have an increased chance to experience flow and perform more consistently (Williams & Krane, 2015).

3.What strategies can Christy's coach employ to help her experience Flow more often and longer? What strategies should her coach avoid, that may inhibit Flow? Why?

Christy's coach should incorporate mental training skills during practices with the aim to focus on managing stresses (relaxation breathing techniques), emotional control (IZOF model), maintained concentration (specific direction of attentional focus), and in setting challenging but realistic goals (related to Christy as an individual and within the team as a whole) (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Christy's coach should refrain from giving more physical training for the goal of experiencing flow as Christy exhibited that she is physically prepared for the demands of the game; however, she shows that she is not mentally prepared. The risk for a coach assigning physical work when mental work is more appropriate can lead to overtraining and injury (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). When Christy was focused on task-oriented goals she experienced a state of flow as this is a factor that facilitates flow (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Christy's coach should refrain from focusing on outcome goal orientations as this can create an increase in pressure to perform and shift Christy's focus towards winning instead of task-relevant cues (Williams & Krane, 2015). Christy's coach should also teach her how to shift attention for the changing demands of the game by either her focusing broad/narrow and/or internal/external (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). The coach should refrain from simply telling her to "pay attention" as there is no clear guidance in width or direction for her to focus her attention (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Christy's coach can create an increased trust in her abilities by utilizing "feel and connect drills" by Christy practicing basketball shooting skills and drills while blindfolded to feel the skills so they become automatic (Vernacchia, 2003). This can teach Christy how to concentrate by learning, practicing, and mastering her ability to stay in the present moment (Vernacchia, 2003). Christy's coach should focus on the present moment during competitions while refraining from letting thoughts linger on what went wrong or get distracted in thoughts of what could go wrong (McCann, n.d.)

4.Pick another sport and identify strategies to promote Flow for athletes in that sport. What is the rationale for each suggestion?

Using the IZOF model for gymnasts can help to increase the chances these athletes experience flow as each apparatus may require a different emotional state for optimal performance (Williams & Krane, 2015). For example, for optimal performance on vault a gymnast may require negative performance-enhancing emotions (attacking, intense, angry) and for a beam routine, emotions may constitute positive performance-enhancing (alert, confident, motivated). Also, having appropriate focus will enable the gymnast to block out floor music starting up right before their beam routine or ignore crowd gasps and applause while waiting to perform. For a strategy to stay focused, centering can be used for a gymnast to ignore disruptive stimuli and shift focus to relevant performance cues (Williams & Krane, 2015). This direction of attention

towards the gymnast's center of mass while using breathing techniques can enable the athlete to feel centered and in control (Williams & Krane, 2015).

5. What other strategies do you find helpful to promote Flow? Why?

The work from Hanin expanded the IZOF model to include the "metaphor self-generation method" where an athlete like Christy can create a symbolic image to compliment her IZOF emotional state (Williams & Krane, 2015). When Christy experienced flow she was aware of the entire court, anticipated actions by everyone that was playing, and was focused on her skills while having confidence in her abilities. For an example of this concept, Christy can use a symbolic image of a hawk scanning the court while intelligently identifying what plays were going to happen and then swooping in at the right moment to create the play. Christy utilizing this metaphor of a hawk can increase her awareness during competitions, change beliefs that she is playing poorly, and direct attention toward task-relevant skills and off negative emotions, images, or beliefs (Williams & Krane, 2015).

Case Study 6 - What You See Is What You Get

Hitting an Ace. Mary is a collegiate tennis player who has been struggling with her serving. Whenever she tries not to double fault, she seems to always hit the ball into the net or too deep. Mary's coach, Bill Mitchell, wants her to try imagery as a "feed forward" strategy (i.e., get information before performing to enhance success) to help her serve better. Mary has never used imagery before to enhance her sport performance, and she is skeptical about its effectiveness. Mary tried using imagery to improve her serving after practice, but she couldn't seem to get a clear image of what she wanted to do, and imagery seemed to make her serve worse rather than better.

Based on your knowledge of imagery, answer the following five questions that relate to what Coach Mitchell can tell Mary about imagery to sell her on trying imagery as a tool to enhance her serving and to help her use imagery in ways that will maximize its effectiveness. Explain the rationale for your answers thoroughly, citing important information from the book and lectures. Your rationale will count as much as your actual response.

1. What is "imagery" and why is it a better performance enhancement strategy for Mary to use than "visualization?"

Imagery will allow Mary to practice a correctly executed tennis serve through creating or re-creating it in her mind (Williams & Krane, 2015). Imagery utilizes all five senses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, kinesthetic, and emotions) to create a vivid experience that will program a mental blueprint in Mary's mind (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). For example, Mary can imagine herself feeling the grip of the tennis racket in her hand, smell the fresh tennis ball, and hear herself grunt as she performs a perfect serve. Visualization only includes a mental image or picturing the movement and without using all five senses a mental blueprint will not be created and the correct technique will not be automated (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

2.What is the scientific explanation for why imagery would help Mary improve her serving? Is Mary's initial experience with imagery unusual? Why or why not?

If Mary practices her serve using vivid imagery, her brain can interpret this mental practice as if she was physically performing the skill (Williams & Krane, 2015). Two theoretical explanations of this are the bioinformational explanation (activating response characteristics for modification, improvement, and strengthening of skills) and in the functional equivalence explanation (brain activates areas and processes as the movements would) (Williams & Krane, 2015). Mary's initial experience with imagery is not unusual as with any mental training skill or physical skill, systemic practice will need to be performed and perfected before mastery of the process can occur (Williams & Krane, 2015).

3.What is the difference between an internal and external imagery perspective? Which should Mary use to enhance her serving?

An internal imagery perspective would be for Mary to see herself serving from inside her body, as in what her eyes would see while she is serving (Williams & Krane, 2015). An external imagery perspective would be if Mary was watching herself perform a serve as if she was watching herself on video (Williams & Krane, 2015). Both perspectives are productive; however, an internal perspective is more conducive for kinesthetic imagery and would be ideal for Mary to enhance her serving performance (Williams & Krane, 2015).

4.Does Mary's imagery skill impact the performance enhancement effectiveness of imagery for her? Why? What 2 imagery dimensions does Mary need to develop to enhance her imagery skill? Explain each and give an example of a drill to develop each imagery dimension.

Mary is not gaining benefit from her current imagery practice as she does not have controllability or vividness of her serves (Williams & Krane, 2015). Controllability would be the ability for Mary to imagine her serve exactly the way she wants to perform the skill with the ability to change the image as needed (Williams & Krane, 2015). An exercise to help Mary with controllability would be to practice imaging her serve over and over from an internal perspective and if she makes a mistake (hitting the ball into the net or too deep) then she will immediately correct the mental image to perform the serve perfectly (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Vividness would entail how precise and detailed Mary's serve is imagined (colors, senses, emotions, and physical sensations experienced) (Williams & Krane, 2015). Mary can use a vivid cue to help her generate a clear image of what her serve will look and feel like such as imagining a "quick coil" while bouncing the ball before she serves.

5.List three strategies that will help Mary enhance her imagery ability and explain why each is important.

Mary would benefit from systemic practice of imagery by programing it into a preperformance routine to help her focus on task relevant cues leading up to matches (Williams & Krane, 2015). A personal highlight video of Mary performing correct technical serves will reinforce confidence in her abilities and has the potential to increase positive emotions through

inspirational music complementing the peak performance video (Williams & Krane, 2015). Since Mary was unsuccessful during her first attempt at imagery during practice and found imagery unhelpful, evaluation of her imagery ability for information regarding her capability to experience different senses, emotions, or perspectives during imagery by using the Sport Imagery Evaluation can be helpful to guide the coach or professional to a proper imagery program for Mary (Williams & Krane, 2015).

Case Study 7 - IM in Youth Sports

"Fueling kids' Passion for Sport". My oldest son almost dropped out of sport when he was six because of bad experiences he had in his first two youth sport seasons. Sadly, this is becoming more the rule than the exception, and intrinsic motivation plays a major role in this process. Intrinsic motivation (IM) is extremely important for youth sport athletes to help them get off on the right foot with sport and physical activity. If extrinsic motivators are emphasized too much, children may have negative youth sport experiences that sour them on sport.

How would you develop a specific youth sport (i.e., soccer, basketball, football, or baseball/softball) program to maximize the development of intrinsic motivation in all competitors?

Answer the following four questions about how to maximize IM in the youth sport of your choice. Explain the rationale for your answers in detail because it is as important as your actual response.

1. Would you emphasize winning, development or fun more in youth sports? Why? Which is most important for long-term participation in the sport? Why?

The developmental stage athletes are in will determine if focus should be on exploring fundamental movements and fun (six-year-old soccer players) or in developing a healthy relationship between learning fundamental sport skills through "deliberate practice" and the enjoyment of sport (16-year-old soccer players) (Portenga, 2016). In creating a program for six-year-old soccer players, fun should be the focus for participation as athletes at this age report fun to be the main reason for participation (Vissek et al., 2015). If these soccer players have fewer positive experiences with sport (lack of playing time, negative coaches, or an outcome goal focus) sport will become less pleasurable and may lead to these athletes quitting soccer (Vissek et al., 2015). Children who have more pleasurable experiences with sport are more likely to create long-term intrinsic motivation through autonomous motivation which is ideal based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) continuum (Parker et al., 2019). A coaching program for these youth athletes that also focuses on supporting SDT through autonomy, competence, and relatedness has been shown to be correlated with autonomous motivation through athletes creating competence in their abilities (Parker et al., 2019). Children who have less pleasurable experiences with sport are more likely to show amotivation and this has been shown to produce maladaptive outcomes (Parker et al., 2019). The 4C's model can be used with these athletes as a coaching technique by positively influences athlete's competence, confidence, connection, and

character (Vissek et al., 2015). Alternatively, a coaching style that emphasizes winning can create an ego-oriented motivational climate that is more likely to produce extrinsic motivation in these athletes by focusing on outcome goals (Williams & Krane, 2015).

2. Discuss how each of these factors would help or hurt the development of intrinsic motivation in your favorite youth sport. Provide a strong rationale for each.

Game scores & standings: Emphasis on outcome goals such as winning, game scores, or standings can create a fixation on results that are based on factors outside of one's control (other athletes' performances) and can create an ego-oriented motivational climate (Williams & Krane, 2015). This type of environment focuses on outcome goals that tend to rely on athlete's external motivation as in trying to prove you are better than others or in trying not to look inferior to teammates or opponents (Williams & Krane, 2015). Coaches that focus on this type of environment will fail to develop personal goals for the athletes, can use punishment for mistakes, or use negative comparisons with teammates or opponents (Williams & Krane, 2015). This type of coaching can result in athletes that have motivational problems, fears and doubts in their abilities, or high-performance anxiety (Williams & Krane, 2015).

Personal improvement: A coach encouraging a program that emphasizes personal improvement relative to the athlete's own performance can create a mastery-oriented motivational climate that will be more likely to produce intrinsic motivation in athletes (Williams & Krane, 2015). Focusing on performance goals can create feelings of competence and success in athletes by learning through skill development, focused attention to tasks at hand, creating positive environments, and increasing levels of effort (Williams & Krane, 2015). In this type of environment, every athlete (regardless of level of talent on the team) will feel as though they are progressing as there is an emphasis is on learning, personal development, and skill building (Williams & Krane, 2015).

Fun with their friends & social events such as barbeques and parent-kid games: Athletes having fun with friends through social events such as barbeques or enjoyable parent-kid games can create an increase in internal motivation through joy and feelings of relatedness within these relationships (Vissek et al., 2015). These events can also cultivate a positive association with sport that can create an opportunity for longevity in participation (Vissek et al., 2015).

Postseason tournaments: Postseason tournaments can either help or hurt intrinsic motivation in these soccer players. If the focus is placed on performance goals, process goals, or having fun, then these games can create intrinsic motivation in the athletes through autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Parker et al., 2019). If the tournament games are focused on winning, comparing to opponents, or standings, then these games can hurt the development of intrinsic motivation by focusing on outcome goals (Williams & Krane, 2015).

3. What types of rewards would you give to athletes and for what reasons? Explain why.

It will be important to praise these athletes based on process efforts (strategies, improvements, focus) instead of rewarding for intelligence or talent (Dweck, 2014). Praising the process can create hardiness and resiliency in these athletes to persevere through challenging situations in

sport and life (Dweck, 2014). Rewarding athletes based on outcomes such as winning, or standings can decrease intrinsic motivation as these athletes can become motivated based on external reasons of achieving outcome goals (Williams & Krane, 2015).

4.What other things would you do to enhance IM?

Creating a growth mindset will show these athletes that their abilities can be developed and ultimately increase confidence and competence (Dweck, 2014). This increase in internal motivation will make athletes want to develop their self-abilities by learning from errors and correcting mistakes (Dweck, 2014). Many athletes have a fixed mindset in that they do not believe they have the capability to meet tasks or think they are a failure, and by shifting focus to a growth-mindset these athletes can perceive effort and difficult challenges as opportunities to increase intelligence (Dweck, 2014). The work from Dweck (2014) shows athletes that have a fixed mindset will be more likely to have amotivation as they do not believe in their abilities and athletes that have a growth mindset will be intrinsically motivated through self-efficacy.

Case Study 9 - Brock Handling Big Game Pressure

Brock is an outstanding quarterback who has completed almost 65% of his passes during the season. Unfortunately, in big games Brock tends to get too "psyched up" or over aroused and often overthrows open receivers. More importantly, despite a pretty good touchdown-to-interception ratio of 20 TDs and only 11 interceptions, Brock tends to throw most interceptions in big games when he believes the pressure is on him to move the offense and score at least 28 points if his team is to win. Brock often doesn't read the defense well in these situations, and most of the interceptions were by linebackers dropping into coverage or safeties coming over to help on the play. To make matters worse, Brock reports not even seeing these defenders when he threw the interceptions.

Answer the following four questions about Brock's energy management problems. Explain the rationale for your answers in detail because it is as important as your actual response.

1.What type of over arousal problem does Brock have that prompts him to have many interceptions in important games? How do you know?

Brock's performance is negatively impacted by excessive arousal which has placed him in the psych-out zone (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Brock is also suffering from a narrowing of focus from high arousal as he cannot read the field to see the defenders that are intercepting his passes and has an inability to shift his attentional focus for the changing demands of the game such as having broad/external focus to drop back for a pass (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Brock is also showing signs of "choking" as his performance is impaired during high pressure situations while dealing with high arousal (Williams & Krane, 2015).

2.How does this problem affect his performance directly?

During sport, arousal levels will increase and allow attention to narrow for focusing on important cues (Burton & Raedeke, 2008); however, in Brock's case his attention is narrowing too far as he

is overlooking important cues such as not even seeing the defenders that are intercepting his passes. High arousal is also causing Brock to overthrow passes to open receivers as his motor control is negatively impacted from a heightened physical response to increased arousal levels (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

3.What strategies would you use to help Brock find and maintain his optimal arousal level? Why?

It will be important for Brock to understand his optimal arousal levels at every stage of performance to build confidence to trust in his abilities through optimal arousal control (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Since Brock is in the psych-out zone it will be important to find his optimal energy zone through using the Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning and the Athlete Monitoring Scale for optimal arousal levels (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). If Brock's arousal level is too high, he can utilize rapid relaxation breathing and a calming cue word to decrease arousal levels and muscular tension (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). Brock can also learn concentration skills to stay in present moment (Vernacchia, 2003) as when under pressure his focus is distracted on the future in needing 28 points to win. Mindfulness is a technique that can also help Brock direct sensory information towards the task at hand instead of becoming distracted by internal and external stimulation from the competitive environment (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

4.How could he develop and automate these energy management skills during practice?

It will be ideal for Brock to start incorporating these energy management skills into practices instead of trying to utilize them first in high-pressure situations (Williams & Krane, 2015). The systemic practice of these skills will make them automatic when incorporated within Brock's physical practice during a preperformance, warm-up, and competition routines (Burton & Raedeke, 2008). This mastering of skills through training and practice will also create a confidence in abilities as Brock will feel as though he is thoroughly prepared for the game and will help to gain confidence in his abilities (Vernacchia, 2003). Another benefit of total preparation is in creating consistency of the mind and body which creates the potential to perform optimally under high stress conditions (Aoyagi & Poczwardowski, 2012). Brock will also create an automatic processing of his quarterback skills so he can focus on task cues during games for optimal performance (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

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