

Written multimodal text



1. When we think of professional sports, we think of physical strength and athleticism. However, emotional intelligence also plays a huge role in an athlete's success. The difference between two athletes competing against each other often comes down to who has the best mindset to win. Here, we explore the growing field of sports psychology and look at the benefits of training players to have emotional intelligence, as well as strength and fitness.

Negative thinking is not for winners. Sport is demanding psychologically, as well as physically. The way an athlete responds to these psychological demands can have a big impact on their performance. Strong negative emotions can damage an athlete's performance, both physically and mentally. Feelings of anger can cause muscles to tense and it is almost as if the body is working against itself. Breathing becomes more difficult and this affects energy levels. These negative emotions also damage a competitor's confidence and motivation to achieve their goals in competition.

2. On the other hand, positive emotions relax the body, which helps it to work more efficiently. Athletes only need to use the necessary muscles, instead of wasting energy dealing with stress. They are more focused and able to work better towards achieving a win. In other words, athletes who have been taught how to control negative emotions perform better in sports.

Why coaching sports is changing. A person's ability to understand and control their own emotions is based on having emotional intelligence. For this reason, sports coaches now also train their athletes to ¹develop their emotional intelligence alongside physical training.

3. The first step of developing emotional intelligence is to increase one's self-awareness. This is a person's ability to recognize and understand their own emotions, with the aim of learning how to manage those that may be negative. Coaches use techniques such as giving athletes journals to record how they felt while they were practicing their sport. The athletes compare the emotions they felt during successful competitions with those they felt when they lost. This technique helps athletes identify the types of emotions that lead to winning behavior in their sport.

Dealing with the inner critic. Athletes are then helped to ²develop strategies to manage their emotions, such as positive self-talk. This consists of getting that voice inside your head, which is saying you can't do it, to start saying you can do it! Athletes then set goals to change negative emotions. Over time, they learn to identify when a negative emotion is interfering with their performance and have strategies to control or change it.

4. Training in emotional intelligence is just as vital for teams as it is for individuals. It helps to build sports values such as teamwork and empathy. Players who understand their own emotions are better able to read those of teammates and opponents. So, next time you lose a game, consider whether it might be your emotions that got in the way of winning ... and not your fitness.