

Emotional Energy – Increases Performance

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One key ingredient that will separate TEAMBC from the others at the Canada Winter Games is the ability manage emotional energy on and off the competition site. I'd like to share a story with you about an athlete that I worked with who was having difficulties managing his emotional energy and this was interfering with his goal - the Canadian Junior National Team. Along the way Todd was reminded of some of his emotional energy management tools to help him produce a gold medal performance. Todd wanted to learn to consistentlybe composed under pressure, do well in big competitions as well as in normal ones.....stay motivated despite a missed target,

being distracted, moving on after a bad shot, maintain his competition strategy and not give-up.....he often found himself without the right emotional energy to do so. In the interest of maintaining the anonymity of my client, all facts that could identify him have been altered.

How athletes express their emotions can provide an important clue to their emotional level. When I asked Todd to described his current energy levels he said he was easygoing, relaxed, satisfied and pleasant (all complacency emotions) usually 'weak' emotions reflecting no need for further action. He lacked any of the top nine optimal emotions such as energetic, charged, motivated, certain, confident, purposeful, willing, alert and excited- emotions that require action. Also Todd observed that under pressure he would panic, start talking negatively and doubting his abilities. I asked Todd what else was going on in his life? This question often gives me an idea of what coping skills and support systems the athlete has. He said well...ummm nothing really. Archery is my life. When we looked a little closer Todd was training full-time, living away from home and in first year university. Looking at this it was clear Todd could manage a lot but was not aware of how his heavy load impacted his performance.

So the first step in the process was development of self-awareness. Todd needed to know himself. He needed to know that his heavy workload was manageable and to develop some ways to cope with the juggling act. He described himself as feeling like a trapped wolf (not strong images). After our first discussion Todd deliberately started to develop "other" activities outside of sport...even if the activity was daydreaming he realized that it was important to his well-being and future goals. Yes, it is 'another' activity for him to do, but a re-energizing activity. After some discussion Todd came to the conclusion that he could use his favourite music or read a book to help him "chill out" (other people do relaxation, visualization or breathing exercises). He said these activities "let his mind escape from the thoughts and pressures of the day." It helped him recover mentally from practices and competitions and most importantly helped his mind and body relax. After giving his mind and body rest Todd's images changed to a growling lion or a tiger ready to hit the target. His deliberate re-energizing techniques had worked!

Another step in the process was combating Todd's inner critic. His inner critic came out in full force when he was overloaded and stressed. Todd first developed an awareness for when the critic would show up. He then worked on reducing his stress level using relaxation, visualization or breathing techniques to reduce his stress. He also implanted positive words to combat the critic "I am strong," "I am powerful," "alert," "ready".....We talked about building himself up and being kind to himself and giving himself credit and how this would help him focus in competitions. We also talked about being realistic and that everyone would naturally like to do things well all the time but that is not realistic.



Finally, we talked about Todd's support system. It was important that Todd had a support system of people that were there for him. People who really cared about him and were honest with him (coaches, team managers, and parents). We talked about how some people might distract him at the event and that he needed a plan to handle these distractors. As much as Todd wanted his friends their he know that the right thing

to do was ask them not to be present so he could focus on his sport. A strong focused emotional support system naturally produces a strong emotional athletic performance. After further discussion Todd was able to identify a few key support persons and worked at identifying others (including role models) that might help him along his pathway to the junior national team. When I asked Todd about how paying

attention to details away from sport actually helped him shoot better he nodded his head. Yes, taking care of business away from archery has actually helped me hit more targets.



Todd realized that knowing himself was important. He learnt to distinguish between himself - the real Todd - and who he was striving to be - his ideal self. And he came to realize that no one is perfect and no one will ever be, but striving to be your best is essential. He also learnt to be objective. And that people at times tend to exaggerate self critiques, he was not a jerk, or a loser if something happened that was unfortunate or not the way he had planned. It

happens to us all and is an excellent opportunity to learn. With his renewed outlook Todd was able to put more energy into practises and competitions when he needed to. He was able to respond to challenges with a feeling of being in control. As training and races improved, he gained confidence that he had his emotions under control and the energy to compete his best (Todd made the junior national team). Hope you are all having fun and meeting those challenges...see you at the Games!!