

GOLDMIND Excellence

A Consistent Focus

Be fully aware of what allows you to perform at your best.
Case example

This alpine skier was very inconsistent in her competitive performance because she had a great deal of trouble getting her thoughts focused in one direction. She performed well in training, but as the race approached she had a

tendency to become very scattered in her thinking, which affected the consistency of her results. She did not race with the same thoughts and focus that worked so well in training.

Pre-Race Reminders

- "Ski the way you know you can ski"
- "Clear head"
- "Relaxed"
- "In Control"
- "FAST"
- "Deep, slow breath"
- "You're in control, just go"

SELF-AWARENESS LEADS TO CONSISTENCY

To become more consistent in competitions, she first had to become fully aware of what allowed her to perform best -- that is, what kinds of feelings and what kind of focus helped most. Second, she had to plan for this focus to occur on a regular basis. Without self-awareness and a plan, her best feelings and focus might happen every now and then, but not consistently enough.

GENERAL WARM-UP

This skier's better training runs had occurred after a good long warm-up. Her better race performances were almost always on the second run. Even her feeling on her bike improved after she had gone a good many kilometers. So it made sense to plan a more extensive warm-up before her first race. A longer warm-up, one that got her heart rate up for an extended time, helped her feel more relaxed before the start, and she performed better when feeling more relaxed. Her more extensive general warm-up consisted of cycling

or of going for a long easy jog before she got to the hill, then increasing her pre-event skiing once she got to the hill.

PRE-RACE PREPARATION AT TOP OF HILL

Her best races had unfolded when she was physically warm and activated (8) and yet feeling loose, relaxed and not worried (3 on the worry scale). Her preference was to be even calmer mentally and less worried (1). Once she started to relax, she skied well. The combination of physical activation and mental calm gave her her best race. For immediate pre-race physical activation, she found that starting to get her body moving 5 to 10 minutes before the start of her race helped. She wanted her legs and body to feel warm and ready as she approached the gate.

For mental calm she needed some reminders to place and to keep herself in the right thinking space—to have a clear head, relaxed and free from



worry. Shortly before leaving the gate, she attempted to draw upon some of the following reminders:

- Ski the way you know you can ski with a clear head, relaxed, in control, fast.
- Take a deep breath—breathe out slowly and think relax. You're capable of anything.
- "You're in control, you're capable, no worries, just go."

The focus she wanted to take down the hill with her was one of **trust** in her body and in herself. She didn't have to think of anything. She simply had to keep a clear focus on what was coming and let her body go—the way it had been trained to go.

FREEING YOURSELF

When she freed herself to do that, she had the best run of her life. She "was really relaxed, wasn't thinking of anything, everything was clear...almost perfect...could see everything coming to me." Her pre-race thoughts were to "relax" and "go fast," "You're capable of anything"--which, of course, she was, when she relaxed and enjoyed it. Technical reminders at this time did more harm than good.

This athlete was somewhat of a free spirit and didn't want to be overly organized. However, shortly before the race, it was important for her to be sure to prepare herself with the sort of thoughts and feelings that had allowed her to approach her potential in the past. Somehow she had to be sure that these feelings and the resulting clear focus surfaced in race situations. Because of her personality, a cassette tape with

music and some focus reminders seemed to be a good option. They would allow her to call upon the basic feeling she wanted without worrying about a moment-to-moment procedure. If you choose to try this option, first use it in training situations so it becomes natural, comfortable, and flowing.

Free-spirited, spontaneous people often prefer to organize less. They don't want to feel too regulated or too analytical. This applies not only to free-spirited athletes but also to actresses, actors, dancers, speakers, and singers. These performers will benefit from a specific kind of pre-performance state of mind that must be planned for. However, the process they go through to get into their preferred mental state will not likely be highly structured or cognitive in nature.

See P. 3 for Reflections Questionnaire. Adapt it to meet your specific needs.

FOCUS

Do it!

Do it right!

Do it right now!

FOCUSED:

**Right HERE,
Right NOW**

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COMPETITION REFLECTIONS (CONSISTENT FOCUS)

Think of your all-time BEST performance(s), and respond to the following questions, keeping that (those) event(s) in mind:

1. How did you feel before the event(s)?

Mentally/physically flat	0	1	2	3	4	5	Energized mentally and physically
Not worried or scared at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely worried or scared

2. What were you saying to yourself (or thinking) just before the start of the event(s)?
 - *Go fast, charge. You're capable of anything! This was one of the few times in my career that I did clear imagery of the whole course (skiing all the way down) before the race.*

3. How were you focused during the event(s) (i.e. what were you aware of paying attention to while performing)?
 - *I was really relaxed, wasn't thinking of anything, except skiing fast. Everything was clear, almost perfect; could see everything coming to me.*

Now think of your WORST performance(s), and respond to the following questions, keeping the event(s) in mind:

4. How did you feel before the event(s)?

Mentally/physically flat	0	1	2	3	4	5	Energized mentally and physically
Not worried or scared at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely worried or scared

5. What were you saying to yourself (or thinking) just before the start of the event(s)?
 - *Thinking too much about technique, worrying about it. Didn't think about speed.*

6. How were you focused during the event(s) (i.e. what were you aware of paying attention to while performing)?
 - *Sort of frozen, my mind was like an ice cube, wandering anywhere and everywhere at the same time. No consistent focus. I was aware of the coach on the side on the way down. I criticized myself on the way down.*

7. What were the major differences between your thinking prior to your best and worst performances?
 - *Best: Relaxed and sure of myself. Confident that I could do it.*
 - *Worst: Uptight, mind wandering all over, worried, and too much technique thought.*

8. What were the major differences in your focus of attention during these performances?
 - *Best: I knew I was the best and focused on going fast.*
 - *Not so good: I wasn't sure I was the best and focused on worry, technique, and self-criticism on the way down.*

9. How would you now prefer to feel just prior to competitions?

Flat	0	1	2	3	4	5	Energized
Not worried or scared at all	0	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely worried or scared

10. How would you prefer to focus your attention during an important competition?
 - *On just relaxing and skiing fast with a clear mind (no distractions) and confidence in myself.*

11. Is there anything you would like to change in your approach to competitive events? or training?
 - *My performances are very inconsistent from race to race. I would like to be able to always feel the good way, the way I felt for my best races.*

12. Is there anything you would prefer to change about the way the coach(es) approach(es) you during training or competitions?
 - *No, I just want to do my own thing.*