

# PSYCHOLOGY AND SPORT WEEKLY

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Daniel Rodriguez, Ph.D., PsychoAdaptation Consulting

## Special Points of Interest:

- *What is Sport and Exercise Psychology?*
- *What do I do?*
- *Learning diaphragmatic breathing*
- *Setting short term goals*
- *My credentials*

Daniel Rodriguez, Ph.D.  
(215) 262-4791  
drodrig63@yahoo.com

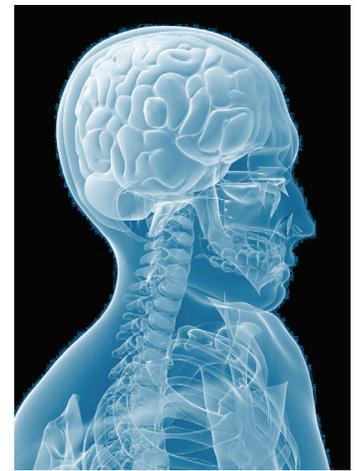
## WHAT IS SPORT AND EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGY, AND WHAT DO I DO?

Sport and Exercise Psychology is an applied and academic discipline that includes clinical and non-clinical work with athletes, as well as research to uncover the mechanisms linking the mind and performance. *Clinical sport psychologists* are state licensed psychologists with the ability to treat athletes for any psychological issue from improving performance to depression and eating disorders. *Non-clinical practitioners* work with athletes on performance enhancement issues, such as overcoming performance anxiety, frustration tolerance, and goal setting. *Academics* teach and conduct research to understand why athletes do what

they do. For instance, I conduct research on the effects of team sport participation on adolescent smoking initiation. Thus, I am a researcher. However, I am also working toward my certification as a consultant; I am **NOT** a licensed psychologist. The Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP) is the primary governing body for sport psychology certification, certifying professionals to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards. In the end, I aim to work in applied settings, translating research to practice.

As I seek AASP certification, I am accruing hours in practi-

cal settings working with athletes. My primary focus is the sports in which I have the greatest experience. This includes tennis, martial arts, and cycling. However, I can work with any athlete and have experience working with basketball players, golfers, and track athletes. I will be available at the club every Sunday from 1 PM to 3:30 PM at Dartmouth Tennis Club during the first 10 week session, or by appointment. If you would like me to work with your child or if you have questions about your own athletic performance or parenting issues, I'm here for you and what's best, right now my time here at Dartmouth is free of charge!



*The mind and body interact in a reciprocal fashion*

## Inside this issue:

- Diaphragmatic breathing 1
- Setting short term goals 2
- What's your goal? Ask 2

## NERVOUS? PRACTICE DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING!

We all get nervous, particularly in performance situations, and mostly when our performance occurs in public settings. We all know what it feels like to be nervous as our autonomic nervous systems are ancient and very reliable. When scared, we sweat and tremble. Our hearts beat faster and our pupils dilate. This is all done in preparation

to fight or flee. Great in dangerous situations, but not so great in sports like tennis that require smooth and skilled performance. Over the next two months, I'll discuss various relaxation techniques, I've used with athletes before. Today, it's about diaphragmatic breathing.

Diaphragmatic breathing is mindful breathing. Unless one

suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, breathing is something we take for granted. However, when nervous we tend to breath faster and more shallow. Diaphragmatic breathing is a method designed to consciously slow breathing by focusing on one's inhaling and exhaling. (Continued on page 2)

## PSYCHOLOGY AND SPORT WEEKLY

### NERVOUS, PRACTICE DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

To begin, visualize a small brown paper bag, a lunch bag like your kids may take to school. Now, take this one step further and imagine that your lungs are that brown paper bag. Your aim is to fill that bag with air when you inhale and empty it when exhaling. As you inhale, imagine that the little bag is filling slowly from top to bottom. As you exhale, by contrast, imagine that the little bag is emptying slowly until all the air is gone. Can you visualize

this scene? If not take a moment and close your eyes and try to capture the little brown bag complete with its texture and characteristic smell.

Now, instead of just visualizing the bag as you inhale and exhale, I want you to breathe in to the count of five and exhale to the count of 10. If you have a hard time doing this, modify it but keep the two to one ratio, exhaling twice as slowly as you inhale. To help you relax, do this seated comfortably and up-

right, or lying down in a safe place. Practice diaphragmatic breathing for one to two minutes or longer if necessary, until you have achieved your desired state.

In a tennis match, you can practice deep breathing before serves or between games. As you do so, try to keep negative thoughts out of mind. You can do so by focusing on your inhaling and exhaling. We call this being “mindful”. We will discuss mindfulness more later!



*Inhale to the count of five and exhale to the count of 10.*

*“Coaches are really good at pointing out our flaws and telling us how to correct them”*

### WHAT’S YOUR GOAL? ASK YOUR COACH.

We all have goals we’d love to achieve. Proximally, for instance, I am interested in completing the papers I’m now writing, and improving my forehand. Distally, I look forward to attaining AASP certification, and writing a book. Some of us are so motivated that we really don’t need to sit down and formally write out our goals. Others benefit from writing their goals down on paper and checking them off as each is

attained. Regardless of your style, you have goals. The highly motivated individual has just learned how to internalize goals but if you were to ask that person what her or his goals are, you’d still find clearly defined goals.

This is an issue I’ll revisit in greater detail later on. However, with respect to sport, have your child speak to the coach and ask coach to point to which skills are in greatest

need of improvement. Actually, your child won’t likely have to ask as coaches are really good at pointing out our flaws and telling us how to correct them. Help your child use this feedback to set a proximal goal. For instance, my coach told me to hit away from my body when swinging my forehand. So, that’s my goal whenever I practice, and I must say it feels awesome when I achieve my goal many times each practice:-)



*I love to teach! I have taught undergraduate and graduate classes nearly every semester since 1996.*

### MY CREDENTIALS

Well, I’ve always been interested in human development and health. To achieve my goals I attained my BA in Psychology and Masters in Counseling from San Diego State University. This was followed by a Ph.D. in Human Development/Educational Psychology from the University of Maryland. I then did a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania in the Department of Psychiatry. Along the way I held several faculty posi-

tions. I was a sport psychology professor at Widener University in Chester, PA. This was followed by research assistant professor positions at the University of Pennsylvania, and now at Brown University. As researchers don’t teach, I have also worked as an adjunct faculty member in the clinical counseling psychology program at LaSalle University since 2004. Thus, I have taught plenty. I will continue teaching this spring, but

online for the LaSalle University School of Nursing.

My research has focused on physical activity, team sport participation, and parenting practices as they relate to adolescent smoking and alcohol use. I am also very interested in stress management and fitness. However, presently, my research efforts are devoted to the effects of maternal smoking during pregnancy on the infant and fetus.