

We Are A System

We are all a system – thoughts, physiology, emotions, actions. Your focus, intensity, and feel can change by adjusting any part of this system. Self-talk, breathing, imagery, body language, and goal directed action are how we mediate change (positive or negative). They impact our performance cycles.

Our brain naturally scans the world for danger. For most of us, 2/3 of our thoughts naturally create doubt and look for what could go wrong (are self-critical and limiting). This is a great survival mechanism and a terribly poor high-level performance mechanism. We need to train our brain like we train our bodies.

It is your job to use your self-talk, your imagery, your breathing, your actions and your body language to create the most powerful, optimistic, energizing, and confident channel possible. Then change back to that channel as often as is needed.

It is your job to create a habit for improvement that engages awareness, acceptance, thoughts, emotions, images, and actions that move you closer to your dream and mission despite the worries, fears, anxieties, and obstacles that are part of life and sport.

Confidence

Confidence is a belief. It is balanced on a clear understanding of the game plan, my role, and our system in this game; and a belief that I have the skills, training, and the preparation needed to execute those skills and my role. It is a belief that I am prepared for this moment. It is a belief that I know what to expect. It is a sense of trust. A sense that I am trained, prepared, and ready for this moment. AND...even more importantly, it is a belief that I can adjust in the moment to any obstacles and still succeed.

Basically, confidence is knowing and feeling that "I can do this." Confidence impacts grit, resiliency, motivation, optimism, and perseverance over time. Confidence improves performance on the ice, and it strengthens one's resistance to pressure. Confidence needs to be front loaded.

There are 2 primary things that build confidence:

1. Success - having done it before and having done it well before.
2. Preparation - preparing for success. Preparing both the mind and the body. Overlearning skills and tactics. Deliberate practice. Creating habits of excellence; both physically and mentally.

There are four other powerful sources of confidence. The 3 bolded, we control.

1. **Self-talk** - what we say to ourselves; the story we are creating in our minds about the situation; what we direct our attention to.
2. **Imagery** - what we picture in our heads, what we visualize
3. Our Body - the meaning we give to the sensations in our body, our ability to adapt to and manage the physiological impact of stress; our body language
4. Talk and encouragement from trusted people (teammates, coaches).

The formula for building confidence is a combination of drawing from a history of successes (an ability to recall them in pressure filled moments); positive focus on what you control; positive focus on what you want to do; staying in the moment; positive and high performance, energizing self-talk and imagery; clarity of your role and what you want to do on the ice; and tons of high speed and high intensity repetition of the physical and mental skills needed.

Pressure

Pressure is a sense, a force, an uncomfortable feeling we experience when we really want something to happen and we have uncertainty or fear that we might not succeed. Our experience of pressure is how our body reacts to what our mind is telling us about the situation we are in or about to be in soon. It combines thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It impacts our physiology and triggers our fight, freeze, or flight response. Some pressure is good and is needed. Too much pressure and our performance typically decline.

There are 2 main approaches to pressure:

1. A longer-term approach that addresses identity and self-perspective. This is the best antidote to pressure but takes time for many of us. It helps us embrace that who I am is not what I do; and who I am is more important than what I do. This perspective fosters stability, improved confidence, and decreased pressure.
2. Addressing specific behaviors, thoughts, images that facilitate belief and confidence within routines that reduce the sense of pressure.

CREATE A POWER CHANNEL AND A WAY TO USE IT CONSISTENTLY

Building confidence and performing well under pressure is learning how to create a positive, powerful, forceful, energizing and clear mission focused channel.

We put ourselves in a position to play our best when we have a channel that encompasses:

1. A clear and concise picture of what we want to do on the ice and what actions create our best hockey.
2. Focusing on what we control and letting everything else fade to the background.