Arousal Regulation
Session Outline

• Why Regulate Arousal?
• Self-Awareness of Arousal
• Anxiety Reduction Techniques
• The Matching Hypothesis
• Coping With Adversity
• On-Site Relaxation Tips
• Arousal-Inducing Techniques
Why Regulate Arousal?

Athletes who don’t effectively cope with stress may experience decreases in performance as well as mental and physical distress. Athletes need to be able to regulate arousal to stay focused and in control.
Signs of Over-activation

• **Body**
  – Muscle tightness
  – Sweating
  – Pounding heart
  – Frequent urination
  – Butterflies in stomach
  – Hyperactivity
  – Dilated pupils

• **Mind**
  – Anxiety
  – Frustration
  – Negative self-talk
  – Diverted attention
  – Focus on wrong things
Anxiety Reduction Techniques

- Somatic anxiety reduction
- Cognitive anxiety reduction
- Multimodal anxiety reduction packages
Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Somatic anxiety reduction

- Progressive relaxation: Learn to feel the tension in your muscles and then to let go of the tension.
Anxiety Reduction Techniques

Cognitive anxiety reduction

• Relaxation response teaches individuals to quiet the mind, concentrate, and reduce muscle tension by applying the elements of meditation.
Anxiety Reduction Techniques

*Multimodal anxiety reduction*

**Stress inoculation training (SIT)**

An individual is exposed to and learns to cope with stress (via productive thoughts, mental images, and self-statements) in increasing amounts, thereby enhancing his or her immunity to stress.
Anxiety Reduction Techniques

*Multimodal anxiety reduction*

Four steps to stress inoculation training (SIT)

1. Preparing for the stressor (e.g., “It’s going to be rough; keep your cool”)
2. Controlling and handling the stressor (e.g., “Keep your cool since he’s losing his cool”)
3. Coping with feelings of being overwhelmed (e.g., “Keep focused; what do you have to do next?”)
4. Evaluating coping efforts (e.g., “You handled yourself well”)
The Matching Hypothesis

An anxiety management technique should be matched to a particular problem.

Note: Some “crossover” effects occur (e.g., somatic anxiety relaxation techniques produce cognitive anxiety relaxation as well).
The Matching Hypothesis

Keys
Follow predictions of matching hypothesis.

- Cognitive anxiety should be treated with mental relaxation.
- Somatic anxiety should be treated with physical relaxation.
- If you are not sure what type of anxiety is most problematic, however, use a multimodal technique.
Coping Categories

**Major problem-focused categories**

- Goal setting
- Time management skills
- Problem solving
- Increasing effort
On-Site Relaxation Tips

• Smile when you feel tension coming on.
• Have fun—enjoy the situation.
• Set up stressful situations in practice.
• Slow down; take your time.
• Stay focused on the present.
• Come prepared with a good game plan.
Signs of Underarousal

- Moving slowly, not getting set
- Mind wandering, being easily distracted
- Lack of concern about how one will perform
- Lack of anticipation or enthusiasm
- Heavy feeling in legs, no bounce
Signs of Under-activation

• **Body**
  – Heavy muscles
  – Slow reactions
  – Low heart rate
  – Low Energy

• **Mind**
  – Bored
  – Inattentive
  – Lethargic
  – Not “up”
  – Over-confident
Arousal-Inducing Techniques

• The goal is to get athletes at an optimal level of arousal.

• Often things such as pep talks and motivational speeches can overarouse athletes.

• So if arousal is to be raised, it should be done in a deliberate fashion with awareness of optimal arousal states.
Arousal-Inducing Techniques

• Increase breathing rate.
• Act energized.
• Use mood words and positive statements.
• Listen to music.
• Use energizing imagery.
• Complete a precompetition workout.