

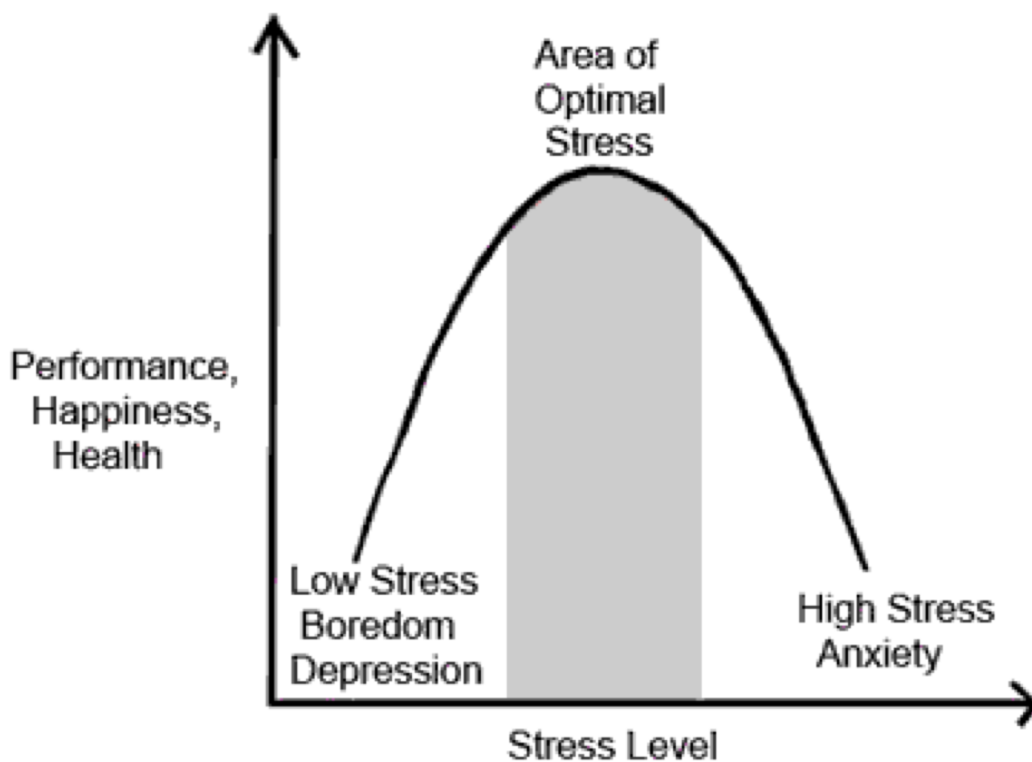


Managing Stress & Anxiety Workbook

Managing Stress and Anxiety

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. Symptoms of stress can include shallow breathing, increased heart rate, muscle tension, sweating, negative or racing thoughts, and difficulties focusing.

Stress is not necessarily a bad thing! In fact, our mind and body require a certain amount of stress to stay alert, engage with a particular task, and perform our best. High performers understand a certain amount of stress is necessary for them to reach their potential and actively work to monitor and adjust their stress to achieve their *high-performance state* (more on this in Activity 2). After working through this module, you will be able to identify and manage your stress using physical and mental relaxation techniques that work for you.



The graph shown above depicts the *Yerkes Dodson law*. It shows peak performance happens at a moderate level of stress. Too little stress or too much stress can decrease our performance.

ACTIVITY 1: What Stresses You?

In Life

List three situations that create stress for you outside of sport. Provide a short explanation why these situations are stressful, your symptoms (e.g., sweating, racing thoughts) and how you typically respond to them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

In Sport

List three situations that create stress for you in sport. Provide a short explanation why these situations are stressful, your symptoms (e.g., sweating, racing thoughts) and how you typically respond to them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

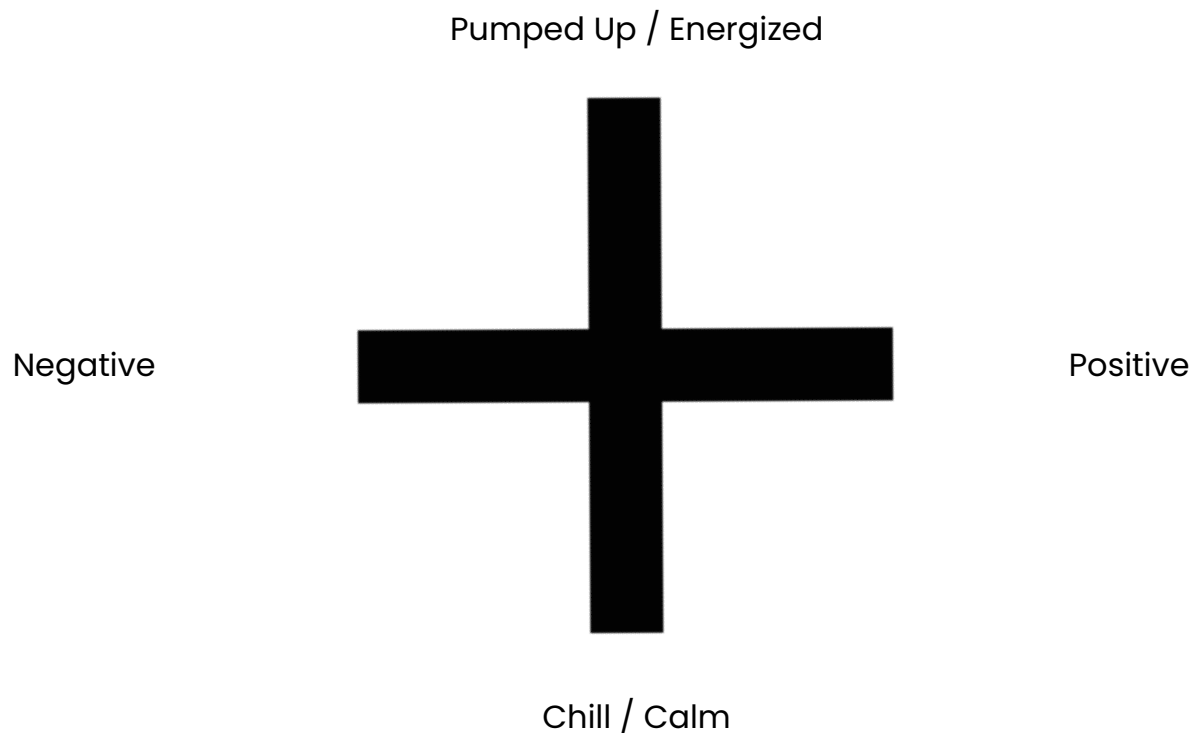
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**I don't think you're
human if you don't
get nervous.**

SIDNEY CROSBY,
Canadian gold medalist in hockey in 2010

ACTIVITY 2: What is Your High-Performance State?

On the graph below, indicate where your high-performance state is with an X. The horizontal axis represents your *mental state*, from negative to positive. The vertical axis represents your *physical state*, from pumped up/energized to chill/calm. There is no right or wrong answer and everyone's high-performance state will be different. If you perform your best when you are highly energized and positive, then your X will likely be in the top right quadrant. On the other hand, if you perform your best when you are calm and positive, then your X will likely be in the bottom right quadrant.



Explain in detail what your high-performance state looks and feels like (physical) and what you're thinking about in that state (mental).



ACTIVITY 2.1: Entering Your High-Performance State.

Increasing Stress:

Make a list of physical and mental techniques you currently use, or could begin using, to “get pumped” in situations where you feel under-activated (or below your high-performance state).

Physical (e.g., jumping jacks):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Mental (e.g., listening to up-beat music):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Decreasing Stress:

Make a list of physical and mental techniques you currently use, or could begin using, to “calm down” in situations where you feel over activated (or above your high-performance state).

Physical (e.g., relaxed breathing):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Mental (e.g., imagining yourself lying on a beach):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Increasing Positive Thoughts and Emotions:

Make a list of physical and mental techniques you currently use, or could begin using, to feel more "positive" in situations where you feel negative.

Physical (e.g., high fiving a friend):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Mental (e.g., thinking about past successes):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

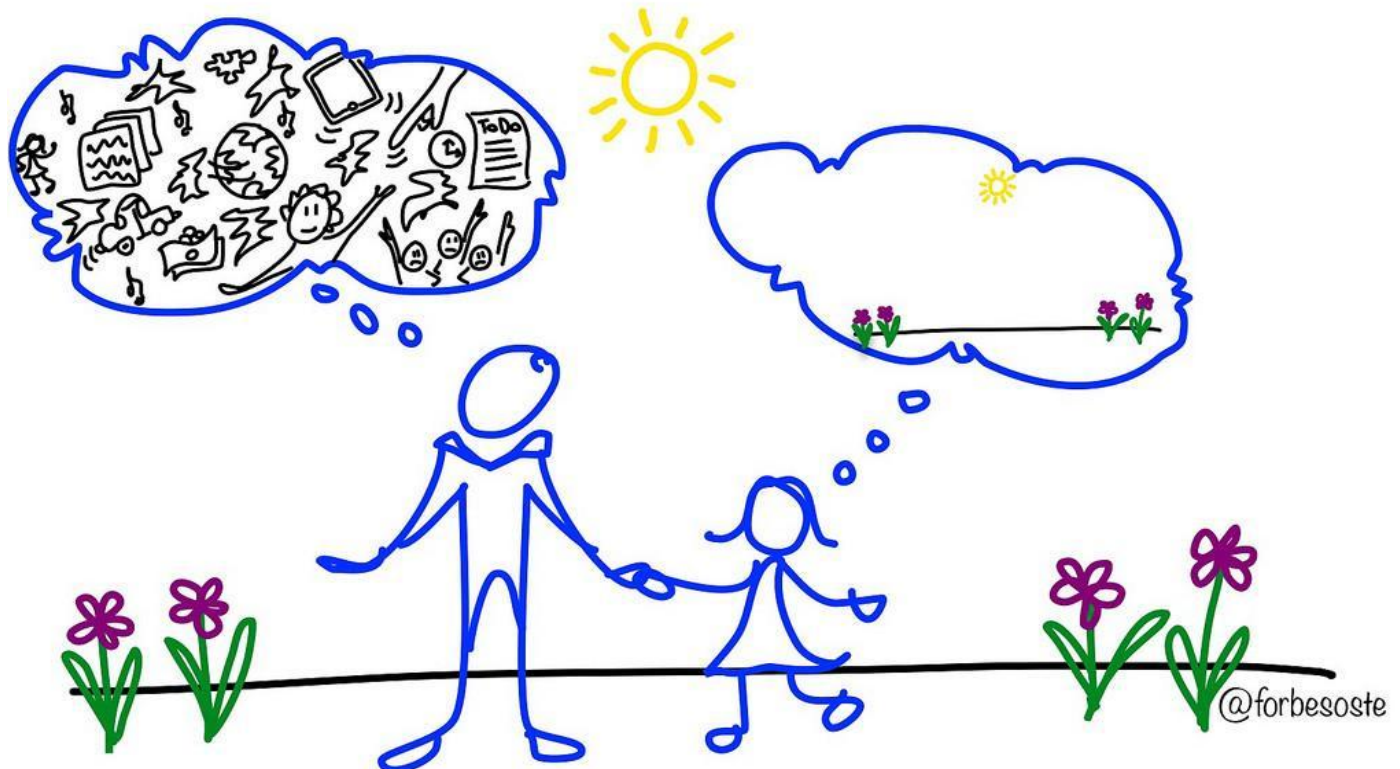


What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and **not overly reactive or overwhelmed** by what's going on around us.

When we think about the past (e.g., a bad race/competition), sometimes we feel sad or upset. Alternatively, when we think about the future (e.g., an upcoming race/competition), sometimes we feel anxious or nervous. Being present and in the moment can help us combat feelings of sadness and anxiety.

Mind Full, or Mindful?



@forbesoste

ACTIVITY 3: Increasing Your Mindfulness.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed if you think of all of the things you have to do, so it is important to stay in the present and focus on the task at hand.

What technique could you use to bring yourself into the present task at hand and stay mindful?



What are some specific situations where it would be especially important for you to remind yourself to be mindful and focus on the present? (e.g., high-pressure situations, when you're exhausted, when you feel like quitting, when you're faced with a challenge, when you're busy/stressed)

What are some simple tasks, ideas or thoughts you can focus on before and/or during a performance to maintain perspective and stay mindful?

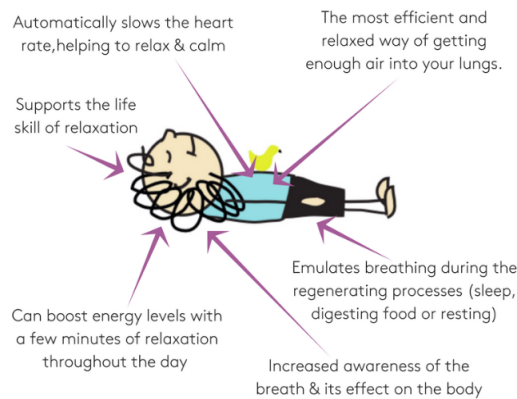
Remember, mindfulness is a skill, and just like any new skill, it takes practice! Mindfulness is like a newborn puppy. When you tell a puppy to sit still it will likely run off in one direction. So, you go and pick up your puppy and tell it to sit still again, and then it takes off in the other direction! When you ask your brain to focus on one thing, it will become distracted and start thinking about other things. THIS IS NORMAL! When you notice that happens, just simply acknowledge it and bring your attention back to what you were focusing on in the first place. When practicing mindfulness, it is helpful to take a non-judgemental and curious stance.



Breathing and Relaxation Techniques: Belly Breathing

One way to help us relax and manage our nerves is to focus on our breathing. Belly breathing means breathing deep through your diaphragm, and it helps calm nerves by relaxing your muscles and relieving tension.

Belly breathing



Here's how to do it:

- Lie on your back on a flat surface (or in bed) with your knees bent. You can use a pillow under your head and your knees for support if that's more comfortable.
- Place one hand on your upper chest and the other on your belly just below your rib cage.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose, letting the air in deeply, toward your lower belly. The hand on your chest should remain still, while the one on your belly should rise. Hold for about 5 seconds.
- Tighten your abdominal muscles and let them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips. Exhale for about 5-7 seconds. The hand on your belly should move down to its original position.

ACTIVITY 4: Practicing Belly Breathing

Practice belly breathing for 5-10 minutes a day.

Breathing and Relaxation Techniques: Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a method that helps relieve muscle tension. In PMR, you tense a group of muscles as you breathe in, and you relax them as you breathe out. You work on your muscle groups in a certain order. When your body is physically relaxed, it is hard to feel anxious.

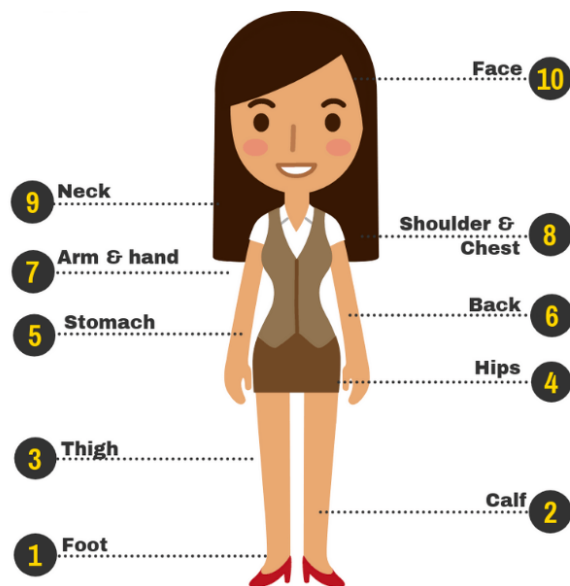
Here's how to do it:

You can use an audio recording to help you focus on each muscle group, or you can learn the order of muscle groups and do the exercises from memory. Choose a place where you won't be interrupted and where you can lie down on your back and stretch out comfortably, such as a carpeted floor.

- Breathe in, and tense the first muscle group (hard but not to the point of pain or cramping) for 4-10 seconds.
- Breathe out, and suddenly and completely relax the muscle group (do not relax it gradually).
- Relax for 10-20 seconds before you work on the next muscle group. Notice the difference between how the muscles feel when they are tense and how they feel when they are relaxed.
- When you are finished with all of the muscle groups, count backward from 5 to 1 to bring your focus back to the present.

ACTIVITY 5: Practice PMR

Practice PMR 2-3 times a week.



Hands	Clench them.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them, and bend your hands back at the wrist.
Biceps and upper arms	Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows, and flex your biceps.
Shoulders	Shrug them (raise toward your ears).
Forehead	Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
Around the eyes and bridge of the nose	Close your eyes as tightly as you can. (Remove contact lenses before you start the exercise.)
Cheeks and jaws	Smile as widely as you can.
Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against the floor or chair.
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest. (Try not to create tension in your neck and head.)
Chest	Take a deep breath, and hold it for 4-10 seconds.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor or chair.
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot. (Check your chest and stomach for tension.)
Hips and buttocks	Press your buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them hard.
Lower legs	Point your toes toward your face. Then point your toes away, and curl them downward at the same time. (Check the area from your waist down for tension.)