

**PLAY LIKE
A CHAMPION
TODAY**

Character Education Through Sports

Champion Coach Note

Educating and Forming Champion Coaches

The 9 Mental Skills of Successful Athletes Applied to a COVID-19 World

While Play Like a Champion continues to work with partners to provide support and resources related to the COVID-19 crisis (see section below), we believe it's also important to provide continuing education that partners can use in the continued formation of athletes, coaches and parents during this time. During the month of April, we will feature a three-part series on how athletes can develop the mental skills needed to get them through this trial and to improve their game when sports resume on the field. We encourage coaches to pass these notes on to your athletes to keep them engaged.



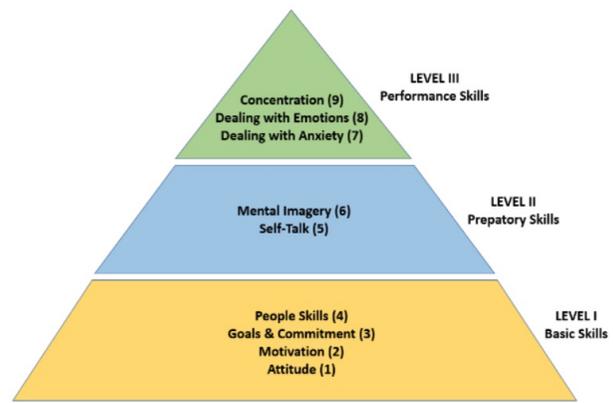
the competition that fuels them.

Jack Lesyk, Ph.D., former sports psychologist for the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers, has identified **nine specific mental skills** that contribute to success in sports. He refers to this as "**The Performance Pyramid**". These nine skills can be developed with instruction and practice. Even though athletes around the country cannot practice or work-out with teammates at the moment, successful athletes will use this time to sharpen their mental skills and better position themselves when it is deemed safe to return to

Including today, three of April's notes will focus on the three levels of mental skills that form Lesyk's pyramid.

LEVEL I – BASIC SKILLS

These mental skills provide athletes with a broad foundation for attaining their long-term athletic and life goals. These skills also help athletes to sustain daily practice. They are needed and applied on a day-to-day basis and are used in both short-and long-term applications.



The Performance Pyramid – 9 Mental Skills of Successful Athletes – Jack J. Lesyk, Ph.D.

1) Attitude: Successful athletes figure out that attitude is a choice; and they choose an attitude that is predominantly positive. They view sport as an opportunity to compete against themselves and learn from their own mistakes and failures. Successful athletes choose to pursue *excellence* rather than perfection and realize that no one is perfect –

not their coaches, teammates, officials and certainly not themselves. Successful athletes also display respect for their sport, opponents, teammates, coaches, officials and themselves.

2) Motivation: Successful athletes come to know that the best motivation is self-motivation. Trophies and championships are great, but true motivation comes from the desire to be their personal best both on and off the playing field. Successful athletes learn to persist through difficult tasks and difficult times (like a global pandemic).

3) Goals & Commitment: Successful athletes set both short- and long-term goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-oriented (SMART)**. They also know that a goal without a plan is only a dream. Lastly, successful athletes understand that falling short of a goal is *not* failure, it's feedback. Feedback is critical to growth and success in sports and in life.

4) People Skills: Successful athletes realize that they are part of a larger system that includes teammates, coaches, officials, family and friends. They are able to express at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way their thoughts, feelings, needs and support. They also learn how to deal with conflict, difficult opponents, teammates and coaches. They strive not to blame others for their own negative feelings/attitude, or shortcomings.

ATHLETE ASSIGNMENTS

This week, here are four mental skills assignments to sharpen your Level 1 Mental Skills:

1) Measure your attitude on a daily basis This includes your attitude toward your teammates, coaches, parents, siblings and others. These are scary and frustrating times, you are bound to feel anxious, frustrated, sad or depressed at times before this mess is over. Your challenge is to note your attitude, and if your attitude is poor, do something to make it better. Choose to be positive!



2) Search on YouTube for motivational videos such as this one to the left.

When you find ones you like, make a note of them and share them with coaches and teammates. You can also search the Internet for motivational quotes. Copy them and share them with coaches, teammates and family. You may provide the motivation for others to keep their attitude positive.

3) Set new goals for getting through this unprecedented crisis. Make a commitment to develop plans to operationalize your goals. Your goals should focus on keeping in shape/working out, an appropriate and healthy diet, relaxation/fun (life balance), continuous learning, and staying connected to teammates, coaches, friends and extended family. [Here's a simple worksheet](#) you can use, or you can create your own.

4) "People Skills." Staying connected and "in-sync" with important people in your life can fight off depression, isolation and loneliness. Stay connected with your teammates and coaches. Do more than just text. Seeing a familiar face and hearing a familiar voice (even via online/mobile video chats) lifts the spirit in ways no text message can come close to achieving. Remember, you can reach out to teammates and coaches to support them, but you can also reach out when YOU need some support!

If you take the time and put in the effort in to complete these four assignments to the best

of your ability, you'll be further developing your Level I, Basic Mental Skills during this time off the field of play. Stay tuned for our second note in this three-part series, which will focus on Level 2: Preparatory Skills – Self-Talk and Mental Imagery.

Scripture of the Week: *I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.* (Philippians 3:12-16)

COVID-19 Resources for Coaches



With youth and high school sports shut down indefinitely, it's critical for the physical and mental health of young athletes that they maintain some routine and realize that their coaches still care about them, even if they don't see them on a normal basis. With that in mind, here are some tips for coaches during this time:

Communicate with Your Athletes: Using appropriate methods of communication based on age and safe environment guidelines, keep in touch with athletes and parents during this time. Send an email, create a group text, setup an online team meeting via Zoom, or send out regular video messages to your team encouraging regular exercise. Send the information above to get your athletes working on the development of mental skills preparing them for this three part athlete-improvement series. This communication will help your athletes keep working on their skills and remind them that you care about them as their coach.

Establish Training Routines: It's important that kids of all ages engage in physical exercise during this time. Help your kids by providing drills they can do at home or giving them daily/weekly workouts they can do to keep training and improve skills. Create your own instruction or search YouTube for thousands of sports-specific training videos for athletes of all sports. Check out our [website dedicated to keeping kids active](#) for additional resources and ideas.

Encourage Good Mental & Spiritual Health: Isolation can be debilitating for people of all ages. For children and athletes used to a team environment, it's important that coaches help them realize they are still a part of something bigger than themselves, while promoting good mental and spiritual health. Encourage athletes to establish daily routines that include prayer and social interaction with family, friends or teammates (online). Focusing on gratitude, good nutrition and plenty of sleep are also important here. We liked [this article with tips and resources from the Association for Applied Sport Psychology](#).

Set Goals, Track Progress: Above we provided [a simple worksheet](#) for your athletes to set and track goals. Encourage your athletes to share their progress with you weekly so they have an Accountability Partner. This will help athletes stay motivated and connected even without a normal season.

Play Like a Champion has a number of other resources for partners as we work together to overcome the difficulties caused by the coronavirus pandemic. [Sign-up for our free](#)

[Friday Morning Rally](#) to get the latest information on the impact of COVID-19 in youth sports, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to get the latest information & share resources with others in our community.

Sports Stations of the Cross

As we enter into Holy Week, we are reminded of Christ's journey to his passion and death. While most of us have been unable to attend regular Stations of the Cross at our churches and schools this Lent, we can still spend time with our family or on our own meditating on these stations. As a unique way to enter into this Holy Week at home, coaches can provide athletes on their teams with *Play Like a Champion's [Athletic Reflections on the Stations of the Cross](#)*. Each station is accompanied by a reflection and a physical activity. Below are some ideas on movement following each station and you can [click here to see an example of a team completing this exercise](#).



- Jumping Jacks
- Wall Sit
- Sit ups
- Push ups
- Burpies
- Lunges
- Squats
- Jog in place
- Alternating High Knee Jog
- Boat hold
- Plank hold
- Double Jacks (2 bounces out/2 bounces in)
- Tuck jumps
- Mountain Climbers (high knees/arms reaching with each knee up)
- Skaters (lateral glide to each side touching floor)

Access Resources & Learn More at PlayLikeaChampion.org

Play Like a Champion Today Educational Series
PO Box 72, Notre Dame, IN 46556 | information@playlikeachampion.org
www.playlikeachampion.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

