

# MENTAL SKILLS FOR YOUTH ATHLETES



***DEVELOPING  
TOMORROW'S  
ATHLETES TODAY***

# Topics for today...

Goal – setting for  
increased motivation and  
focus



Imagery for better  
performance



Managing expectations:  
both internal and external

# Goal - Setting



# Joseph Schooling



“If it wasn’t for Michael, I don’t think I could have gotten to this point. I wanted to be like him as a kid,” Schooling said. “I think a lot of this is because of Michael. He is the reason why I wanted to be a better swimmer.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2016/aug/13/michael-phelps-taught-a-lesson-for-once-by-singapores-joseph-schooling>



# Goal-setting Guidelines

S

Goals should be **SPECIFIC** and address what you plan to do. Include as much detail as possible, such as dates, ranking points, positions, times that you will need to accomplish your goal.

M

They should be **MEASURABLE**, such that it can be quantified. Establish criteria and milestones along the way to keep track of progress.

A

Goals should be **ACHIEVABLE**. They should not be too easy to attain or on the other hand, completely out of reach. Goals should be set just outside of your reach but with time and effort you will attain them.

R

They should be **RELEVANT** in that goals are connected/linked to what you set out to accomplish.

T

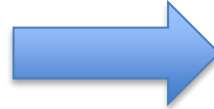
Goals should be **TIME-BOUND**. Set timelines which are realistic yet challenging; a timeframe that will give you a sense of urgency.

# NOT SMART vs. SMART

S	Not Specific	I want to be a great swimmer.
	Specific	I want to be ranked no. 1 in Singapore by 2017.
M	Not Measurable	I want to make many good passes in the game.
	Measurable	I want to make 10 successful passes to a team-mate.
A	Not Achievable	I want to score 100 goals in every game.
	Achievable	I want to score at least 1 goal per game.
R	Not Relevant	I want to go to Tokyo Disneyland.
	Relevant	I want to go to Tokyo 2020 Olympics.
T	Not Time-Bound	I want to improve my endurance.
	Time Bound	I want to improve my endurance within 3 months.

# Types of goals

PROCESS



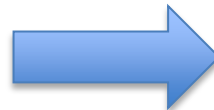
Focuses on the specifics of a procedure in which the performer will engage during performance.

PERFORMANCE



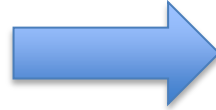
Focuses on improvements relative to one's own performance.

OUTCOME



Focuses on the results or some form of standards in reference to somebody else.

# PROCESS



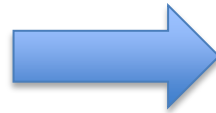
- 15 mins of extra sprint training to improve endurance
- Proper execution of kicking technique
- Eat healthily to manage weight







# PERFORMANCE

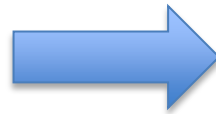


- Take 5 shots at goal during the match
- Improve beep test results by 2 levels
- Lose 2kg without muscle loss





# OUTCOME



- Score a goal every game
- Be national age-group 100m champion
- Make national youth team



**Trisha, 11 year old netball player, wants to become starting goal shooter for School.**

Process

Performance

Outcome

Clean execution of shooting technique, focusing on full extension of arm and flick of wrist.

Increase shooting percentage to > 90% per game

Become starting goal shooter for school by end of 2017.

Practice 50 clean shots after every netball training for 2 months

Taking at least 10 shots per game, at National Schools in April 2017.

**SHORT-TERM**

1 month ~ 3 months

**MID-TERM**

3 months ~ 6 months

**LONG-TERM**

6 months ~ 1 year

# IMPORTANT!!!

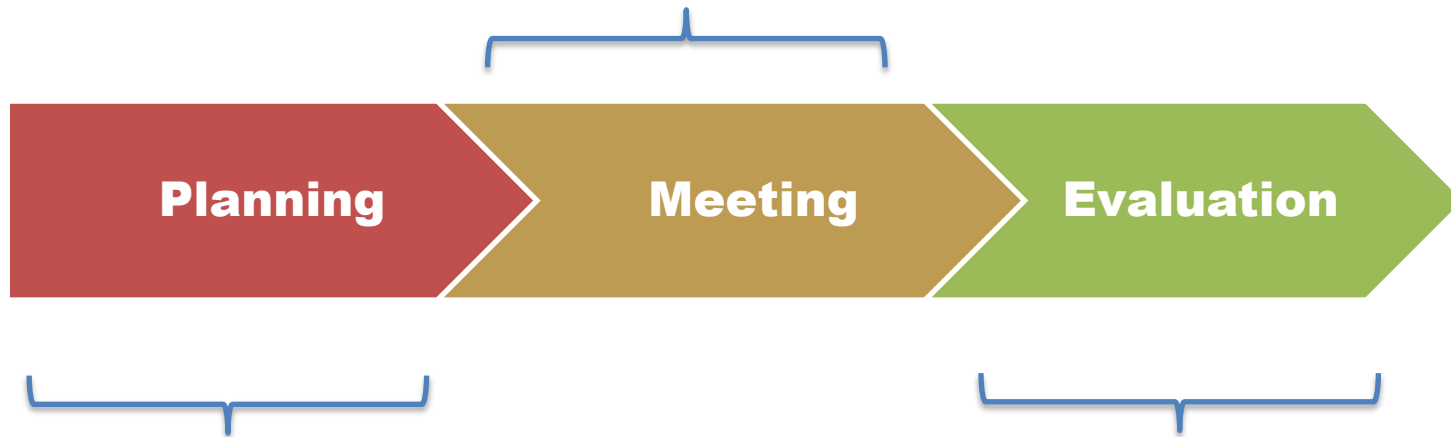
**REVIEW**



**REFLECT**

# Goal-setting System

- Convey goal setting messages
- Stimulate athlete thinking on goal setting
- Discussion on potential goals
- Seek consensus



- Identify athletes/teams needs
- Identify potential goals
- Consider possible strategies that can assist in goal achievement

- Provide feedback
- Evaluation sessions to monitor



# Advice...

Use a combination of  
process,  
performance, and  
outcome goals

Use positive, instead  
of negative wording

Move focus away  
from outcome goals  
as competition  
approaches

Athlete ownership of  
goals

Identify action  
plans/strategies to  
achieve goals

# Imagery

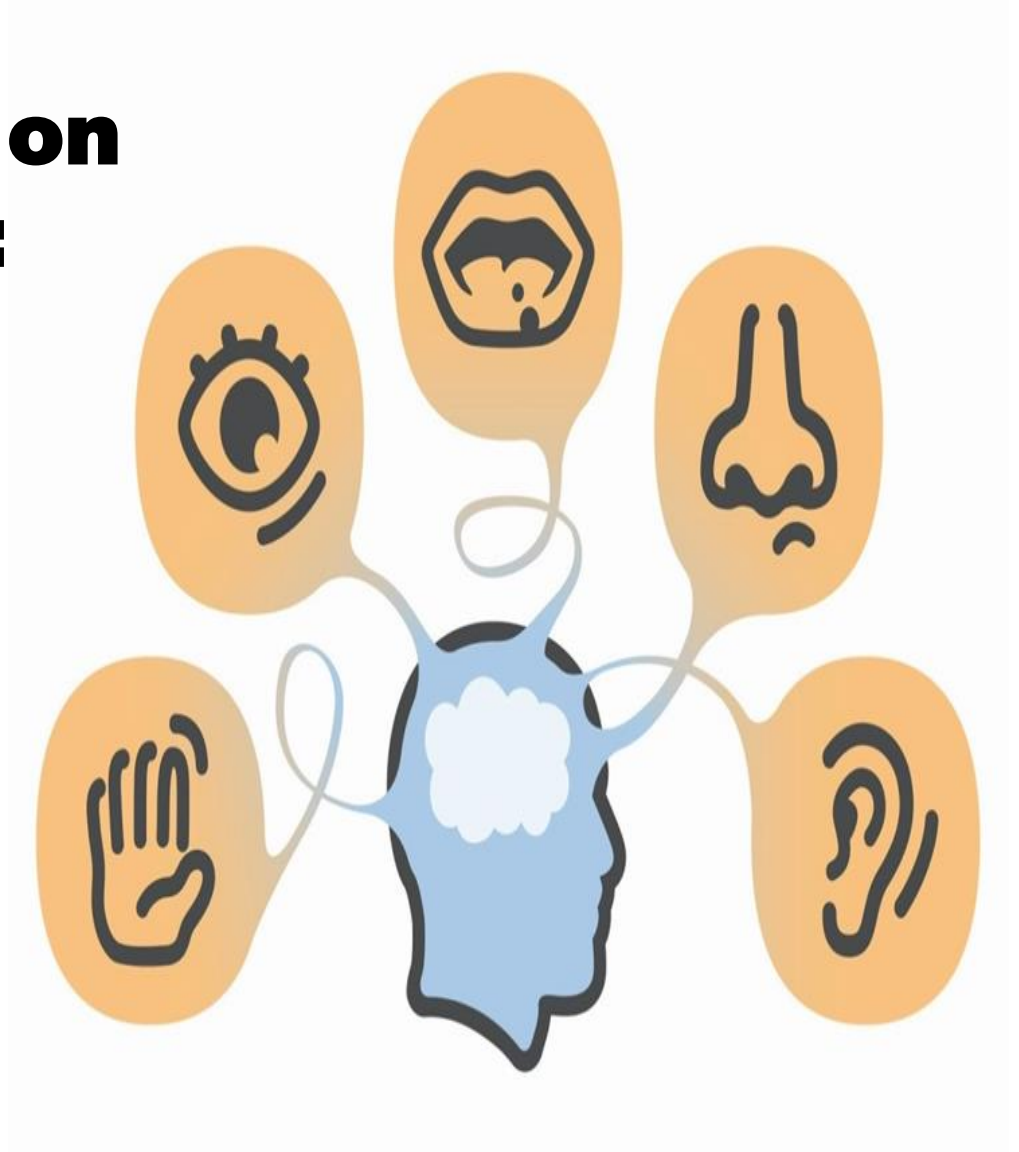






# Imagery relies on your senses of:

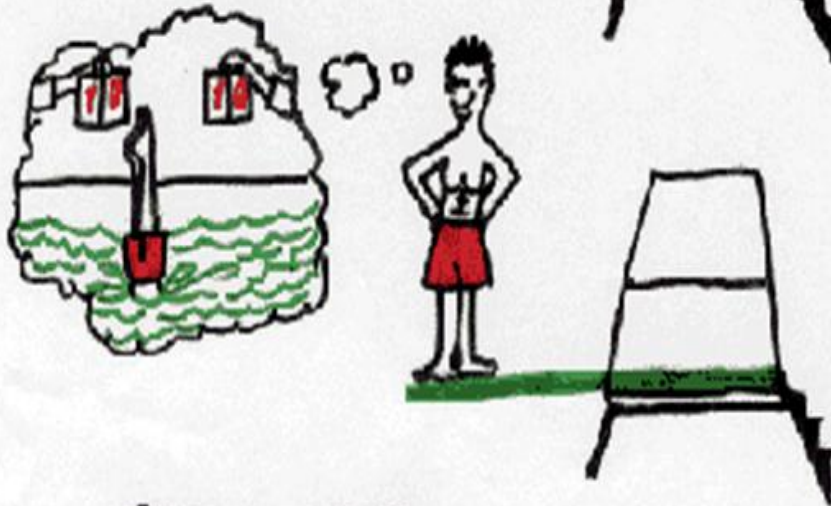
- **Sight**
- **Smell**
- **Taste**
- **Hearing**
- **Touch**
- **Feel\*\*\***







**Vividness**



**Controllability**



**Self-awareness**



# Imagery Use



Skill Acquisition/motor readiness

- Learn new skills
- Correct mistakes in technique
- Increase neural-muscular activation

Self-confidence

- Recall of good past performances
- Imagine positive outcomes in competition
- Provides mental focus

Relaxation

- Virtual stress-free space
- Decrease general arousal levels

# Advice...

Keep it simple

Clearer images give  
better outcomes

Frequent practice  
builds imagery ability

Imagery should  
incorporate all the  
senses

Managing



Expectations

# Sources of Expectations

External



Parents

Peers

Coaches

Internal



Self

External



Parents

Peers

Coaches

**Long term  
development**

**Task oriented  
training environment**

**Process over  
outcome**

**Excellence over  
success**



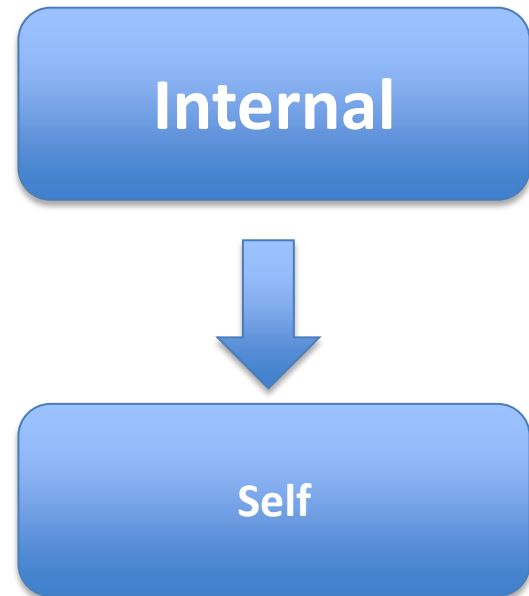
**Know your current  
level**

**Be realistic**

**Failure is an  
opportunity to grow**

**Prepare for the  
worst, hope for the  
best**

**Control the  
controllables**



Controllables	Uncontrollables
My warm up routine	Officials
My techniques	Judges
My strategy	Competitors
My strengths	Cheering
Preparations (Enough sleep, food, hydration)	Environment
Getting to competition on time	Crowds

# How to manage?

**Step 1. Identify expectations**

**Step 2. Challenge unrealistic expectations**

**Step 3. Replace with more realistic expectations through a focus the process**

**Step 4. Ensure external pressures sing the same tune**

# Advice...

Acknowledge  
individual differences

Better understand  
your athletes

Build self-awareness  
in your athletes

Focus on the fun and  
enjoyment

# **Final notes...**

- **Mental skills are just like physical/technical skills and require frequent practice**
- **As much as possible, weave the practice of mental skills into training**
- **Bear in mind the holistic long-term development of the youth athlete**



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!**

**ANY QUESTIONS???**

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