



ANXIETY IN SPORTS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Potential talent and skills are basic essentials in every sport activity be it indoor sport or an outdoor sport. In this “twenty-first century” when there is a strong competition in every field, there’s always a pressure on an individual to perform well. However many times this pressure of performing well and an urge to win extends its limits and leads to psychological imbalance, anxiety, depression, low self esteem and thus creates stress disrupting the normal lifestyle. Anxiety is a response to mental worries and emotional instability . Anxiety in Sports often leads to low performance and personality breakdown which enhances the stress levels .Stress can be internal as well as external in origin .The management of stress is an essential part for healthy living . Various coping behaviors and approaches can be adopted for the management of stress.

Keywords: Anxiety, Aggression, Stress Management, Coping Behaviors, Exercises.

Introduction

Sports is a physical activity which helps in holistic development of an individual be it physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. In this modern era sports is not just an activity to be performed it has now become a full time profession.

Twenty first century is an era of competition and in this era there is a strong urge to win that often creates physical as well as psychological issues in health such as anxiety, depression, stress, aggression, low self-esteem.

Anxiety in Sports

Anxiety in sports is very common due to the fear of losing the game. Its common symptoms include sweating, increased heart rates, imbalance in blood pressure and disrupted breathing patterns. Sportsmen may also suffer nausea and sudden trembling of body before the game or in between the game or after the game. Anxiety is multi dimensional including an injury, anxiety due to social relations and worries, guilt or shame, aspirations with self and others etc. (Malik and Singh, 2015). Severe anxiety flashes may cause stress disorders and lead to damage to mental health. So, it needs to be cured as soon as possible.

Anxiety is due to the demands placed upon us and the person taking it in a negative stress form, which eventually leads to the commitment of inexplicable error and thus poor performance and sudden breakdown. Anxiety in sports disrupts the players performance and they could not give their best in the event. Fears and tensions lead to somatic anxiety or emotional disturbance. Anxiety is experienced by all players but the level of it may vary in all depending upon how the player perceives them, with what mind set.

It is observed that participants performing individual sports suffer more anxiety than those who perform in teams. Anxiety can be categorized in following levels-cognitive level related to the thought process, somatic level related to the physical responses and behavioral level depending upon the patterns of behavior possessed by an individual (Malik and Sihag, 2015).

Aggression in Sports

Aggression is a form of behavior which is used in negative terms. In sports the pressure to win the game frames the psychological mindset like a saying 'everything is fair in love and war'. The consequence of losing the game builds in aggression and frustration thus disturbing the mental state of the sportsman.

Aggression as bason stated is directed towards the harmful action for another person and doing destructive violence, it may be intentionally or unintentionally too. Aggression can be hostile (intent to harm others), instrumental (aim is to win) and assertive (with an unusual effort and energy) (Malik and Khanna, 2015). During the phase of aggression the sportsman can lead to self harm as well as harm to others. Sports coaches should address the needs and understand the various changes

in expressions of the players to avoid the aggressive behavior of the players and prevent harm to any.

Stress in Sports

Every sportsman has a great play spirit and an urge to win in the provided task. This puts on the person the pressure and stress of performing best, minimizing the errors and gaining victory. Stress can be external as well as internal. External stress involves the stress from external social factors and demands that puts on frustration and anxiety. These may be due to cultural factors, discrimination economic factors, physical factors, internal stress can be due to personal limitations, internal conflicts, low level of aspirations with self and experience of failure, absence of good support, love and care.

Techniques for Controlling Anxiety

One can control anxiety and stress by adopting following techniques-developing the 'winning feeling' to create positive mindset, second is to use the 'centering technique' i.e. focussing to the center of the body kind of meditating, using various breathing techniques and finally adopting the technique of 'let go' (Malik and Sihag, 2015). Don't let anxiety burden you, accept it as a part of a game and let it go.

Stress Management

Stress management is necessary for a healthy living be it in sports or in daily life style. This can be achieved by adopting various coping behaviors.

Coping behavior in general refers to a person's efforts to resolve any problem and create different ways to handle the stressful situations and form new situations at each life stage (Erikson, 1959).

Types of Coping Behaviors

There are various ranges of copying behaviors followed by the researchers in their fields.

Mechanic and Kahn talked about the "problem focussed" and "emotion focussed" coping. Problem focused coping refers to the facing of challenging situations and constructing ways to overcome them. Emotion focused coping refers to putting on efforts for regulating one's own emotion. Lazarus stated two modes of coping "direct action" and "palliative modes". Direct actions are the actions performed by an individual being in a stressful situation. Palliative mode refers to

thought processing of an individual providing emotional support to oneself and relief from stress. Various approaches can be used to manage stress-

Physical Approaches For Coping Stress

Doing Body Massage

Doing a massage is one of the best ways of relaxing and making the body stress free. Physiotherapists use this practice to heal the person from injury as well as to make the body relax and stress free. It is also suggested that one should practice regular oil massages of the body parts which maintains the flexibility of the body and joint strength. It reduces the oedema and also prevents tissue adhesion. It is important to note that massaging requires skilled practice for better results. The most common of them are effleurage, malaxation, Percussion techniques. Effleurage is the first step of massage with the spreading of oil and relaxing the body, Malaxation is the biggest technique used to treat body stress and it involves lifting and pinching of the skin in different variations and Percussion is often used to cure respiratory problems in heart attacks, in this the body is pressed rapidly with the hands.

Exercise

Exercise is the best way to cope up with stress disorders. It helps people in holistic fitness being it physically, mentally or social health. There are various forms of exercises.

Isometric exercise

This exercise is used for the development of body strength for example a person putting muscular force on immovable objects.

Isotonic exercise

This type of exercise refers to the building of body strength as well as endurance. Person uses the muscular force to move heavy objects. It is a kind of mechanical exercise including lifting of weights, doing chest workouts, push ups etc.

Calisthenics exercise

These exercises are the combination of isotonic as well as isometric exercises and it is useful for orthopedic patients and their rehabilitation. This exercise benefits arms and torso.

Isokinetic exercise

This exercise is basically practiced with the help of special equipment, in which substantial force is put on a bar-like object to pull it backwards.

Passive exercise

These exercises do not help much in the physical fitness maintenance due to the less physical efforts put into it.

Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercises basically means “with oxygen” due to the requirement of high levels of oxygen during the workout. Aerobic exercises have a great effect in improving the physiology of the person; it also maintains the psychological health.

Physiological and psychological effects of exercise.

It is found that exercise acts as an antidepressant and helps people in coping from anxiety. Exercise makes people feel better and confident about themselves and makes a positive change in their attitude and confidence thus giving them psychological benefits.

Breathing Practices

It is said that if one can attain mastery over his breathing cycles then the pattern of living will change accordingly in a very healthy manner. There are different forms of breathing patterns-

Deep breathing

It is found that deep breathing reduces the stress level and also provides strength to our heart and body.

Diaphragmatic breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing should be practiced for 10 to 15 minutes, three four times a day. This provides greater efficiency to the pulmonary activities.

Even breathing

Even breathing helps in reducing the shaking of the breath and keeping the inhalation and the exhalation process at the normal pace level.

Alternate nostril breathing

This type of breathing helps in improving the concentration when practiced regularly and also increases the lungs capability.

Adopting Relaxation Techniques

Dr Benson suggested the techniques of relaxation and making the body free from stress and anxiety. In this technique the person is asked to choose a word or any phrase and recite it peacefully this will eventually give the calming effects to the body. Second one is the *Jacobson progressive relaxation technique* by Edmund Jacobson, it involves the relaxing of the muscles systematically. The third one is the *Broota's relaxation technique* this comprises of the four basic exercises starting from the deep breathing, dhanurasana, doing cycling and leg exercises. *Biofeedback technique* electromyography is the most common and effective under this relaxation technique which is used to lower the muscular tension in the various body parts. *Autogenic training* is a self hypnosis form of relaxation of body limbs (Hussain and Gulrez, 2003).

Yogic Methods of Relaxation

Yogic methods of relaxation include the yog practices, asanas, pranayama, meditation. Asanas are practiced while sitting in specific postures and relaxing the body. Yog nidra is also a yogic practice, in this technique series of steps are performed by an individual by making the body relax in a sleep posture. Meditation yogic practices such as Vipassana provides immense benefits and heal from any sort of stress issues.

Social Approaches for Coping Stress

Social relations between an individual and society provide healthy well being of both the individual as well as the society. "Social Ties" and "Social Support" plays a strong role in handling the daily stress, this could be family bonds, friends, community etc. Healthy social support system helps in avoiding many diseases and also leads to self development and growth.

Emotional Approaches for Coping Stress

As Shantideva writes:

"There is no evil like hatred, There is no merit like patience" (Husain and Gulrez, 2003).

So one should adopt the practice of patience, one should stay 'happy' and keep a 'positive attitude'. 'Humour' has the most effective healing power, breaking the tension and making one feel calmness in mind and heart.

Behavioral Approaches for Coping Stress

Pavlov's conditioning states that the person develops a certain type of behavior when conditioned regularly in a certain manner, one can condition their behavior and feeling with this technique. Lifestyle maintenance is another factor which helps in coping stress. This includes proper diet, daily healthy sleeping and exercise habits. Time management also breaks the stress disorder, positive reinforcement including the praising and rewarding activities, one can also self reward on small-small achievements and reduce the pressure of performance. Habit formation is another behavioral practice which maintains a healthy lifestyle.

Organizational Methods for Coping Stress

This can be achieved by doing workplace counseling, Organizing the stress management programs, and being cooperative with each other.

Religious and Spiritual Approaches

Religious and spiritual activities helps in stress management also, one's faith in spiritual power brings the strength within and a belief of overcoming the obstacles and sufferings.

These are the various coping techniques and approaches that can be used by the sports persons to minimize the level of anxiety and stress and give their best performance.

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