

An Athlete's Mental Tools

Submitted By: Danielle Priel

Have you ever been nervous to twirl in front of judges or a lot of people? Well, you're not alone. Many other twirlers feel the same way. Here are some mental training suggestions to boost your confidence.

The Sport Science and Medicine Council of Saskatchewan provides a mental checklist to help you become mentally prepared for any obstacle (Sport Medicine & Science Council of Saskatchewan (1998). *Mental Training Checklist*. Retrieved from <http://smscsqjx.sasktelwebhosting.com/services/mental/related.htm> [1]).

1. **Motivation** – Have the interest and desire to be the best athlete that you can be. Be determined and committed in accomplishing your goals, which will allow you to become your overall best. The metaphor, “the sky is the limit” encourages one to reach for their goals.

“Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them -- a desire, a dream, a vision.” ~ *Muhammad Ali*

2. **Confidence** – Believe in yourself. Even though baton is a competitively judged sport, it is important to remember to go out on the floor and perform for only yourself. Have faith that you will put on a great show.

“What lies before us are little matters compared to what lies within us”. ~ *Oliver Wendell Holmes*

3. **Habits of Thinking** – Always think positive. You can do whatever you put your mind to. Prove to yourself that you know you can do it. Of course, nothing is impossible. “The impossible becomes possible” when you are optimistic.

My motto is to ‘believe in yourself, and anything is possible.’ And ‘you can do anything you want, if you just put your mind to it’.

4. **Focus** – Concentrate and tune out distractions. If you see one of your competitors doing a trick that you have difficulty doing, ignore them. You should only be worrying about what you are doing. Best chances are that you can do a lot of things that they have a hard time doing. Everyone has their strengths. Focus on what you have been training on and show everyone what you've got. Try to stay away from things that take your attention away from your objective. Keep your head in the game.

“Success is focusing on the full power of all you are on what you have burning desire to achieve.” ~ *Wilfred Peterson*

5. **Visualization** – Seeing a picture through your mind's eye. Find a quiet place, close your eyes and think of doing perfect routines by yourself or as a team. You don't have to listen to your music, but it might be easier to get the full picture. You can use imagery in practice, when you're at home, when you're lying in bed before you go to sleep; visualize the night before the competition, on the way to the competition, in warm-up, or before you go out to perform. Try to do it as often as you can. The purpose of doing visualization is to maximize performance, build confidence, correct skills, and motivate.

“Visualization is daydreaming with a purpose.” ~ *Bo Bennett*

This mental checklist is a tool for you to be confident, positive, and focused on your performance. Motivation encourages you to strive for your best, and with visualization your goals come into sight.

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Please note: This is only an opinionated article. Seek professional advice from a sport psychologist.

About the Author

Danielle Priel is Saskatchewan's Athletes' Rep. She is currently studying Accounting at University of Saskatchewan. She has been competing in twirling for seventeen years and has been coaching for five years. Her most fond baton memory is twirling in the semi-final round at the 2007 World Baton Twirling Championship in Hamilton, Ontario, where she competed for the first time in the Senior Women's Freestyle division.

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