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Sport psychology is all about helping athletes become mentally tougher by teaching them to use a wide range of psychological strategies, right? Yes and no. One focus of sport psychologist is on “mental training,” that is, helping athletes refine their psychological approach to practicing and competition. Within this focus, athletes may learn specific strategies, such as goal setting, preperformance routines, imagery, or relaxation, to help them be more consistent in their motivation, regulate their arousal during competitions, focus effectively, and/or work effectively with teammates to achieve a specific outcome.

Another important focus, though, is the person. In the pursuit of excellence, we sometimes forget that athletes and coaches are not just performers, but are individuals who have many different roles and responsibilities and whose lives sometimes are stressful and out of control. Athletes and coaches also may be students, friends, boy/girlfriends, husbands/wives, workers, sons/daughters, parents, to name just a few. Each of these roles has many different responsibilities, stressors, and worries that may affect their ability to focus and concentrate, stay motivated, stay energized, and just perform. Although the ideal may be to “park” all those worries at the door of the locker room or talk about them with a friend or colleague, the reality is that, for some, these options just do not work.

Sport psychologists can help athletes and coaches effectively cope with such stressors and multiple roles so they do not bleed over and interfere with performances. Having a supportive objective professional, who understands the stressors associated with sport performance and what it is to simply be a human being in a stressful world, provides athletes and coaches with an avenue to talk about their concerns and find positive solutions to the situations they face. Doing so can make a tremendous difference in that person’s life and may help clear the way for improvements in sport.

At the Center for Sport Psychology and Performance Excellence we have a staff of consultants who understand the many roles of athletes and coaches and are trained to work with the performance and personal concerns that may interfere with athletic success. For more information about our services and how we can work with you and/or your team, contact us at (940) 369-SPORT (7767). Or you can visit our website and send us an email at www.sportpsych.unt.edu In closing, we leave you with the sport quote of the week:

“All of us get knocked down, but it’s the resiliency that really matters. All of us do well when things are going well, but the thing that distinguishes athletes is the ability to do well in times of great stress, urgency, and pressure.” *Roger Staubach, NFL Hall of Fame Quarterback*