

Motivating your athletes

What is motivation?

“Tendency to STRIVE for success, PERSIST in the face of failure, and experience PRIDE in accomplishments.”

In other words, a motivated person has clear achievement goals like pursuing a gold medal; secondly, she will continue to pursue her sporting goals despite obstacles such as non-selection in a national team, injury, or poor form.

There are three types of motivation:

1. Internal motivation

Internal motivation is playing sport because it is fun, it is ENJOYABLE, and you find it challenging. It also provides a SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT, which makes you want to continue playing and improving. It is also about training hard and valuing the benefits of training hard to improve your performance and an athlete's lifestyle because you want to be FIT AND HEALTHY. Internal motivation come from inside of you; you choose to play, because you want it for yourself.

2. External motivation

External motivation does not come from within the person. Your reasons for playing your sport include PLEASING OTHER PEOPLE such as parents and coaches and doing it because you would FEEL GUILTY if you did not. It is also likely that to some degree you play sport for the REWARDS you might receive for being successful such as praise and money. Sometimes you train hard because if you don't you will be PUNISHED with extra training if you train or play poorly. So you are trying to avoid being punished. So the sources for your motivation come from outside of yourself.

3. Amotivation

Amotivation is a LACK OF INTEREST in why you play. You might lose interest because you are NOT IMPROVING ...or you have SUSTAINED MULTIPLE INJURIES one after the other.... Or you may feel you cannot make it to the NEXT PERFORMANCE LEVEL.... Or maybe you find other pursuits more interesting.

Athletes will experience all of three forms of motivation. What is important is the overall motivational profile – which should be HIGH in internal motivation, LOWER in external and EVEN LOWER again in amotivation. The most important motivation comes from within the athlete – INTERNAL MOTIVATION.

The research on elite athletes shows they are driven mostly by internal motivation – they love their sport and want to work hard to be successful. The research also shows that internal motivation is associated with several POSITIVE OUTCOMES including high performance, enjoyment, persistence, problem solving, creativity, and a reduced fear of failure.

Once humans satisfy the physiological needs for food and shelter, there are three psychological needs of humans; the need for AUTONOMY, the need for COMPETENCE, and the need to BELONG.

These needs are universal across all humans and research has supported these three needs in several cultures and contexts. Indeed, the satisfaction of these three psychological needs leads to psychological growth and wellbeing. So a coach should always try to make his/her athletes feel autonomous, competent and belonging to the team.

3 factors leading to great motivation

“To be as good as it can be, a team has to buy into what you as the coach are doing. They have to feel you’re a part of them and they’re a part of you.”

1. **Autonomy:** people feel more motivated, when they have the feeling, that they direct their own actions or at least have a say in what they have to do. If you let your athletes decide too, from times to times, their engagement will rise strongly.
2. **Mastery or Competence:** people like to get better at stuff and feel competent in what they do. We need the feeling, that we are improving. So one way to rise the motivation of your players is helping them get better at something AND also letting them know about their improvement.
3. **Belonging:** people are social beings; they like belonging to groups and being included.

7 strategies to increase your athletes motivation

“I’d say handling people is the most important thing you can do as a coach. I’ve found every time I’ve gotten into trouble with a player, it’s because I wasn’t talking to him enough.”

1. Clarify the “WHY”

Your athletes should know why they come to practice and why they play their sport. Like we saw before the strongest motivation is the internal motivation. So helping your athletes to understand, if their motivation comes from within them, is key to their future level of motivation. Best way to do this, is in a one-on-one talk. Once they understood that their sources of motivation are actually internal, they will train harder to become more competent. On the other hand, if you find out, that all of your athlete’s sources of motivation are external, you might wanna have a talk with him/her and explain him/her, that he or she will never be satisfied while playing that sport, if his or her only motivators are all external.

2. Set goals

After your athletes have understood WHY they do their sport, it will be easier for them to set individual goals. Setting goals is a great tool for improving motivation, give orientation and helping athletes through times of amotivation. Especially with younger athletes, it is important to focus more on process goals (“I want to give my best every game”) than result goals (“I want to score 15 points per game”). Every time an athlete reaches a goal, his or her motivation will rise.

3. Helping your athletes visualize their goals

After your athletes have set their goals, you can help them to “see” themselves reaching those goals. They should not only see it, but also try to “feel” it. This will boost their motivation, because they have a clear image/feeling in their mind about their goals. In a quiet moment you just ask them to close their eyes and ask them to picture themselves in the moment, when they are reaching their goals. Helpful questions are: “Where are you?”, “How does it feel, when you finally reach it?”, “Who is with you?”, “What do you see?”, “What do you feel?”, “How did you manage all of it?”, etc.

4. Support your athletes

As a coach you are an important person in the life of your athletes; especially if you train younger athletes. So be aware and empathic: observe your athletes and if you ever have the feeling, that they struggle emotionally or are having a tough time, go and have a one-on-one talk with them. Show them that you care about them and that you want to help them.

5. Be positive

Many coaches have a very negative style of communication and motivation. They yell at their players, scare, threaten and punish them. On the long term this will stress their athletes and ultimately diminish their performance; especially with young athletes. So make sure that you use punishment only on rare « emergency » occasions and that in general you motivate your athletes by praising and encouraging them. Every athlete wants to feel valuable and important.

6. Communicate your expectations

Each and every player should know what you expect from him/her. Very often coaches think, that it is clear what they expect from their players, but for the players it is not. Nothing is more frustrating and demotivating for athletes than not knowing what their coach wants from them. To avoid that players are frustrated about their individual specific tasks and roles, you should communicate these as early as possible.

7. Fun

Make the time, that you share with your athletes, a fun one for you and your athletes. This doesn't mean that you can't work hard. Actually athletes work harder, when they feel a sense of purpose and meaning in what they do and when they are having fun. So try to make your practices fun for them: try out new things, offer practices rich in variety, joke with your athletes and have fun yourself.

Summary and more

"Success isn't about what you accomplish as a coach, it's about what you inspire and motivate your athletes to do"

Every one wants to feel skilled and valued. The best way to motivate other people is to make them feel skilled and valued. This is especially important for young athletes who are just learning the skills and strategies of a sport.

The key to motivating young athletes is to point out their successes, encourage them to improve, and teach them needed skills. If you follow the strategies indicated above you can to create an ideal atmosphere to motivate athletes.

HOW TO MOTIVATE CHILDREN IN SPORT

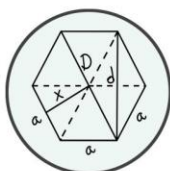
@BelievePHQ



MOTIVATING YOUNG ATHLETES; THE ROLE OF THE COACH



@BelievePHQ



Allow athletes to problem solve on their own



Develop an athlete centered approach to coaching



Demonstrate effectively. Use players on the team to help demonstrate



Autonomy; Allow athletes to have ownership over their sporting experience



Create a positive learning environment for your players

Get to know your players. Understand what motivates them for playing. Do they want to play competitively or for fun?



Develop an effective coach athlete relationship



Let athletes know what they are doing well



Try not to criticise young players



Provide constructive feedback when an athlete makes a mistake



Place an emphasis on hard work and effort rather than winning



Help parents to understand how they can best support and motivate their children



Emphasise team work. Create sessions where athletes must work together to achieve a goal

10 WAYS TO CREATE A POSITIVE MOTIVATIONAL CLIMATE FOR ATHLETES



1

Make your athletes feel that they play an important role within your team



2

Develop a positive climate where mistakes are a part of learning



3

Help your athletes to achieve 3 basic needs; autonomy, competence and relatedness



4

Challenge your athletes to strengthen their strengths



5

Support your athletes and encourage self improvement



6

Encourage leadership among your athletes



7

Create an environment where athletes can be creative



8

Recognise individual progress



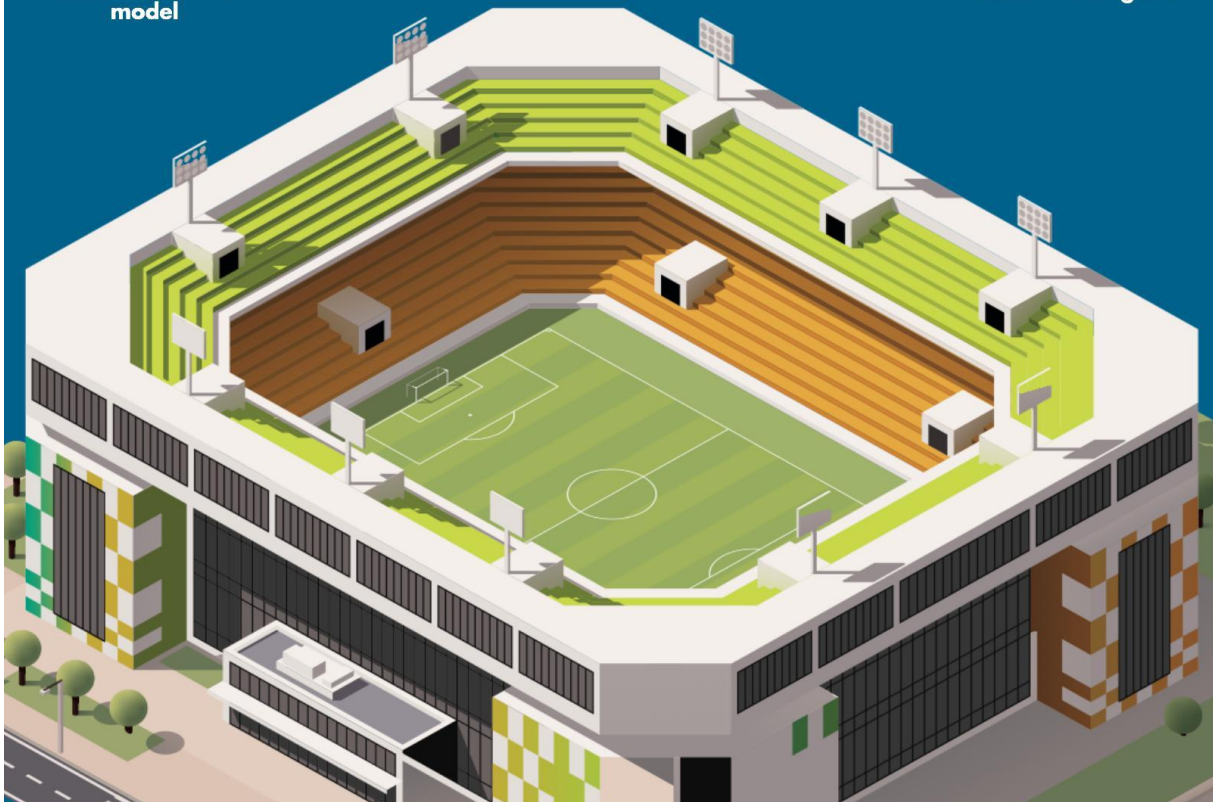
9

Be a positive motivational role model



10

Challenge your athletes to achieve their goals



Sources & further literature

- The Winning Mindset, Online Course by International Olympic Committee.
<http://onlinecourse.olympic.org/course/search.php?search=mindset>
- <https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/6-tips-for-motivating-young-athletes/>
- <https://appliedsportpsych.org/resources/resources-for-coaches/motivating-young-athletes/>
- Sport Psychology for Coaches by Damon Burton & Thomas Raedeke

Contact



Frank Muller Mental Coaching

Sport Psychology for High Performance & Wellbeing

+352 691 524 260

frankmullercoaching@outlook.com

www.frankmuller-coaching.com

