

# MINDFiT

## MENTAL WELL-BEING FOR SPORTS

# WORKSHOP 1: FOCUS ON BREATHING

**Timing:** At the beginning of training – the ideal time to achieve mental readiness, reduce nervousness, and develop focus and present-moment awareness. This technique can also be used before competitions to calm nerves and concentrate on athletic performance.  
 Duration: 20 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Teach athletes the basics of conscious breathing as a tool for self-regulation.
- Develop the ability to calm the nervous system in stressful situations (e.g., before a competition, during important training, or after a mistake).
- Introduce a “mental entry” routine to training through a short breathing technique.

## Coach's Role:

The coach takes on the role of guiding the brief conscious breathing exercise. No professional psychological knowledge is required – what matters is clear, calm communication and the ability to lead the group in sync with the breathing rhythm.

## Exercise Description:

### 1. Introduction (3–5 minutes)

- The coach gathers the team in a circle or seated position (standing is also fine).
- Brief explanation:
- “Breathing is a powerful tool we all have. When we’re under stress, we often unconsciously hold our breath or breathe shallowly. Today we’ll learn how conscious breathing can help us calm the body, focus the mind, and enter training more effectively.”
- The coach can mention that professional athletes, including Olympians, use breathing techniques to manage pressure and achieve peak concentration.

### 2. Guided Exercise: 4-7-8 Technique (10 minutes)

The coach guides the group through the 4-7-8 breathing pattern:

1. Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds
2. Hold the breath for 7 seconds
3. Exhale slowly through the mouth for 8 seconds

#### Instructions:

- Athletes close their eyes or fix their gaze on one point.
- The coach counts aloud for the first two minutes to help the group find rhythm.
- The next two minutes are done in silence.
- The coach reminds: “If this feels too long, feel free to shorten it – the important thing is that it feels comfortable.”

### 3. Partner Exercise (5 minutes)

- Develop awareness of one's own and others' breathing rhythm
- Practice calm, clear communication
- Athletes pair up (ideally face-to-face, seated or standing).
- The coach assigns who is Person A and who is Person B in each pair.
- Person A first guides their partner through the breathing rhythm (4-7-8).
- The task is to speak softly but clearly, with pauses:
- “Inhale... 1, 2, 3, 4...”
- “Hold... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7...”
- “Exhale... 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8...”
- Repeat the cycle 3-4 times (approximately 2 minutes).

# WORKSHOP 2: SETTING BOUNDARIES

**Timing:** At the end of training – an ideal time, as athletes are already physically active and more relaxed, allowing for deeper emotional reflection and communication.

**Duration:** 25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Help athletes recognize and express their emotional, physical, and communication boundaries.
- Teach them how to say “no” without feeling guilty.
- Develop healthy habits of self-respect and mutual respect within the team.
- Prevent burnout, frustration, and passive aggression.

## Coach’s Role:

The coach leads the discussion and ensures a safe, non-intrusive environment. They do not judge responses but encourage honesty and active listening. It is important that the coach also models respectful boundary-setting behavior.

## Workshop Description

### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

The coach opens with a brief explanation:

“In sports, we often want to be team players, to show strength and adaptability. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t have personal boundaries. Boundaries aren’t a sign of weakness – they’re a healthy way of protecting what matters to us. Without them, frustration, burnout, or conflict can easily arise.”

The coach may share a personal example of setting a boundary with a colleague or athlete – and how that helped the situation.

### 2. Reflection Exercise: When were your boundaries crossed? (7 minutes)

The coach asks the group:

“Think of a situation in sports where you felt uncomfortable – when you crossed your own boundary. Maybe you pretended something wasn’t difficult, didn’t matter to you, or didn’t bother you. What happened? How did you react? What would you do differently today?”

Instructions:

- Athletes write down an example (1-2 minutes).
- Then, 2-3 athletes (volunteers) share with the group.
- The coach thanks each person for their honesty and supports authenticity.

### 3. Role Play: How to say “no” (10 minutes)

The coach explains that “no” is a sentence for self-protection – without aggression or shame.

“We can say ‘no’ and still be part of the team. It doesn’t mean we don’t want to help – it means we’re also taking care of ourselves.”

#### Instructions:

- Athletes work in pairs.
- One person acts as someone crossing a boundary (e.g., a coach asking for extra effort when the athlete is already exhausted; a teammate making insulting ‘jokes’).
- The other responds assertively – clearly, calmly, and without attack.
- Switch roles after 2 minutes.

#### Example phrases the coach can offer:

- “I appreciate your trust, but I don’t have the capacity for that right now.”
- “Please don’t comment on my appearance. It makes me uncomfortable.”
- “I can’t stay longer today – I need rest.”

## 4. Final Reflection (3 minutes)

The coach asks:

- How did it feel to say “no”?
- Was it hard? Was it freeing?
- Do you feel more ready to set boundaries when needed?

The coach encourages athletes to practice boundary-setting outside of sports – in family, school, and relationships – as this skill is strengthened through practice.

## What do athletes gain from this exercise?

- Confidence in expressing their needs and discomfort
- Assertiveness without aggression
- Reduced frustration and conflict within the team
- Greater resilience to internal and external pressures
- Long-term: lower risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion

## Recommendations for the Coach:

- Normalize boundary-setting – praise when an athlete speaks up.
- Avoid penalizing those who cannot give “more.”
- Regularly check in: Do athletes feel safe setting boundaries during training

# WORKSHOP 3: RELATIONSHIPS IN THE TEAM

**Timing:** At the end of training – the ideal time for emotional connection and group reflection, as athletes are more physically relaxed.

**Duration:** 30 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Raise awareness about the importance of mutual respect, trust, and shared values within the team.
- Build positive communication among team members.
- Strengthen the sense of belonging and mutual support.

## Coach's Role:

The coach creates a safe and supportive environment in which all team members feel free to express themselves. It is important to encourage honesty while also emphasizing respect, and to personally model open and positive communication.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction and Group Discussion (7 minutes)

The coach starts with open-ended questions to the group:

- “What does being part of a team mean to you?”
- “What qualities do you appreciate in your teammates?”

The coach writes down recurring key words (e.g., respect, honesty, effort, listening, unity) on a board or piece of paper. The goal is to lay a foundation for the next exercises.

## 2. Exercise: Circle of Trust (10 minutes)

### Instructions:

- Athletes stand in a circle (or sit if tired from training).
- The coach explains:  
 “We’re going to do a simple but powerful exercise. Each person will turn to the person on their left and say something positive about them – a quality they appreciate, something they’ve noticed in training, during competition, or in everyday behavior.”

### Examples:

- “You’re always smiling and lift the team’s energy.”
- “You never give up, and that inspires others.”
- “You know how to listen and give advice when needed.”

### Important:

- Emphasize that comments should be sincere, respectful, and non-intrusive.
- The coach goes first to set the example.

### 3. Writing Values: Personal and Team (10 minutes)

#### Instructions:

- Each athlete gets a piece of paper or uses their notebook.
- They write down 3 values that are personally important to them in a team (e.g., friendship, discipline, humor, mutual respect).
- Then, in small groups (3–4 athletes), they compare and discuss their values, working together to agree on 3 shared team values.

Each group then presents their chosen values to the whole team. Together, the team can vote on the final Top 3 Team Values.

### 4. Final Reflection (3 minutes)

The coach concludes with a few reflection questions:

- “What did you learn about each other today?”
- “How can we nurture the values we named today?”
- “What can we do to make our team work even better?”

Optionally, the team can write the final thoughts on a poster and display it in the locker room or training area.

## What do athletes gain from this exercise?

- Strengthened mutual trust and respect
- Better communication and emotional connection within the team
- Reduced conflicts by building a positive team culture
- Greater sense of belonging, unity, and motivation

## Coach Recommendations:

- Refer regularly to the agreed team values throughout the season.
- Praise athletes when they demonstrate those values in practice.
- Occasionally repeat the “circle of trust” or similar exercises if group cohesion starts to weaken.

# WORKSHOP 4: CONFLICT RESOLUTION EXERCISES

**Timing:** At the beginning of training – when athletes are still mentally fresh and open to communication and social exercises that require attention and reflection.  
Duration: 25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Teach athletes how to respond constructively in conflict situations.
- Develop skills in active listening, expressing emotions, and finding mutual solutions.
- Reduce tension and misunderstandings within the team by improving communication.

## Coach's Role:

The coach creates a safe and supportive environment for open communication. It's important that they do not judge any responses and clearly emphasize that conflict is a natural part of team life – what matters is how we handle it.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Brief Overview of Conflict Resolution Strategies (5 minutes)

The coach gives a short, interactive presentation. This can be done using a whiteboard, paper, or verbally. Key healthy conflict resolution steps include:

- Calm down before reacting
- Express how you feel (without blame): “I feel \_\_\_ when \_\_\_”
- Listen to the other person fully without interrupting
- Focus on finding a solution, not a culprit
- Focus on behavior, not on the person

The coach says:

“Conflicts are normal – it’s important to learn how to handle them without insults, silence, or explosions. Today we’ll practice exactly that.”

### 2. Role Play – Conflict Simulation (15 minutes)

#### Instructions:

- The coach divides the athletes into pairs.
- Each pair receives a conflict scenario – these can be prepared in advance on slips of paper or given verbally.

#### Example scenarios:

- One athlete is always late to practice; the other is frustrated.
- One doesn’t pass the ball; the other complains harshly.
- Post-match conflict – blaming each other after a loss.

### Pair task:

- In the 1st round, act out the conflict with no control – how it typically plays out in real life.
- In the 2nd round, with the coach’s help, apply the learned strategies – calm tone, expression of feelings, and focus on finding a solution.

### Coach tips:

- Walk among pairs, listen discreetly, and intervene with suggestions if needed.
- Encourage realistic, yet non-violent communication.

### 3. Group Discussion and Reflection (5 minutes)

The coach leads a full group discussion with these questions:

- “How did you feel during the first version of the conflict?”
- “What changed when you tried to resolve the conflict constructively?”
- “Which strategy seems most useful to you, and why?”

### The coach may close with:

“What can we do to resolve conflicts better in our team – without attacking or avoiding?”

## What do athletes gain from this exercise?

- Development of emotional control and social intelligence
- Learning to listen actively and express themselves without blame
- Strengthened connection through tension resolution
- Increased team cohesion and fewer misunderstandings

## Coach Recommendations:

- Conflicts shouldn't be avoided – they should be handled in a healthy way.
- If a real conflict occurs on the team, the coach can use elements of this workshop for mediation.
- Encourage athletes to use phrases like:
  - “I hear you.”
  - “I understand how you feel.”
  - “Let's solve this together.”

# WORKSHOP 5: ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION ABOUT ONE'S OWN NEEDS

**Timing:** At the end of training – when athletes are more physically relaxed and ready for introspective work and emotional sharing.

Duration: 25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Teach the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication.
- Develop skills to express one's own feelings and needs without hurting others.
- Strengthen mutual respect and understanding within the team.

## Coach's Role:

The coach ensures a safe environment where everyone can communicate openly. Through simple examples, the coach helps athletes understand how tone, words, and posture affect communication. They provide clear, concrete examples and guide the exercises.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Explanation of Communication Styles (5 minutes)

The coach gives a brief explanation of the three basic communication styles:

STYLE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
PASSIVE	SUPPRESSING OWN NEEDS, NOT EXPRESSING OPINIONS	“IT’S NOT IMPORTANT...” (EVEN IF IT IS)
AGGRESSIVE	DOMINATING, ATTACKING, BLAMING	“YOU’RE ALWAYS THE PROBLEM!”
ASSERTIVE	CLEARLY EXPRESSING ONESELF WHILE RESPECTING OTHERS	“I FEEL FRUSTRATED WHEN WE’RE LATE BECAUSE PUNCTUALITY MATTERS TO ME.”

The coach explains:

“Assertiveness means standing up for yourself—without stepping on others.”

## 2. Exercise: “I-Messages” (10 minutes)

### Instructions:

- The coach writes on a whiteboard or flip chart: “I feel \_\_\_ when \_\_\_ because \_\_\_.”
- This structure helps avoid blame and encourages athletes to speak from their own experience.

### Examples:

- “I feel frustrated when I’m interrupted because it’s important for me to finish my thought.”
- “I feel anxious when I don’t know the training plan because I like to be prepared.”

### Activity:

- Each athlete writes one personal “I-message” related to a sports situation (e.g., the team, coach, match, loss, pressure...).
- Volunteers can share their sentences with the group.

## 3. Partner Work: Expressing Needs (8 minutes)

### Task:

- In pairs, athletes express one personal need to their teammate using assertive communication.

### Instructions for pairs:

- The first person uses an “I-message” to express a need (e.g., more support, better communication, less pressure...).
  - The second person listens and paraphrases: “I understand that \_\_\_ is important to you because \_\_\_.”
- Thank you for sharing.”
- Then switch roles.

## 4. Final Reflection (2 minutes).

### The coach asks the group:

- “How did it feel to speak this way?”
- “Was it easier than usual? Harder?”
- “Can you imagine resolving misunderstandings in the team this way?”

### ”What do athletes gain from this exercise?

- The skill to express thoughts and emotions in a healthy way
- Greater self-awareness and emotional literacy
- Strengthened team communication and mutual respect
- Fewer conflicts and misunderstandings through clearer communication of needs

### Coach Recommendations:

- Praise every attempt at assertive communication – even if it’s not perfectly worded.
- Encourage the use of “I-messages” in everyday interactions.
- When misunderstandings occur in the team, refer back to this workshop and offer the chance to reapply the strategies.

# WORKSHOP 6: NUTRITION FOR MENTAL WELL-BEING

**Timing:** At the end of training – when athletes are more relaxed and open to reflection and planning changes in daily habits.

Duration: 30 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Raise awareness of the connection between nutrition and mental health.
- Develop habits of tracking nutrition in relation to emotions and energy levels.
- Encourage small but sustainable changes in eating habits that support well-being.

## Coach's Role:

The coach does not need to be a nutritionist – basic preparation and, if possible, collaboration with a sports psychologist or nutritionist is enough.

The goal is not to evaluate athletes' diets, but to help them understand how food affects mood, focus, and energy.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Short Lecture: Nutrition and Mood (10 minutes)

The coach (or a specialist) explains:

“What we eat affects not only our body but also our brain – and our mood. Stable energy, clear focus, and emotional balance depend on our eating habits.”

Key points:

- Fast sugars = rapid mood spikes and crashes
- Caffeine and dehydration = increased tension and reduced concentration
- Stable nutrition (fiber, protein, water) = mental clarity and emotional stability
- Skipping meals = irritability, fatigue, decreased motivation

The coach can prepare a short presentation, poster, or simply share examples verbally, based on the athletes' daily routines.

### 2. Exercise: Food and Mood Journal (10 minutes)

**Instructions:**

- Each athlete receives a paper divided into two columns:
  - a. What I've eaten/drunk today (so far)
  - b. How I've felt throughout the day (tired, focused, tense, calm, hungry, irritable, etc.)

## **Task:**

- **Athletes fill in the chart based on their day.**
- **Then, in pairs or small groups, they share insights:**

**“I felt a drop in energy after breakfast—maybe I needed more protein.”**

**“When I was dehydrated, I was more irritable during training.”**

## **Coach note:**

**Emphasize that this is not a competition or test – it's a tool for self-reflection.**

# WORKSHOP 7: GOAL-SETTING AND VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

**Timing:** Before training – to focus attention and motivation, and mentally prepare athletes to work on their personal goals.

Duration: 30 minutes

## **Workshop Objectives:**

- Help athletes define clear and achievable goals.
- Introduce visualization as a tool for motivation, concentration, and reducing performance anxiety.
- Strengthen internal focus before competitions or major challenges.

## **Coach's Role:**

The coach guides athletes through understanding goals and using visualization. They encourage reflection but do not impose goals. It's important to create an atmosphere of focus and personal introspection.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What Are SMART Goals? (7 minutes)

The coach explains the SMART goal-setting framework:

- **S** – Specific (clearly defined)
- **M** – Measurable (progress can be tracked)
- **A** – Achievable (realistic, challenging but attainable)
- **R** – Relevant (important to the athlete)
- **T** – Time-bound (has a deadline)

#### Example of a SMART goal:

“In the next 3 weeks, I want to improve my serve accuracy in training by 20%, through 10 extra repetitions three times per week.”

The coach can ask:

- “What are your goals for this part of the season?”
- “Are they concrete and achievable enough?”

### 2. Writing a Personal Goal (8 minutes)

#### Task:

- Each athlete writes one personal goal for the upcoming week or month.
- It must follow the SMART structure.

The coach offers support and feedback, helping athletes refine their goals to ensure they are specific and time-bound.

#### Examples:

- “Before the next match, I want to control my breathing before each serve.”
- “Over the next 2 weeks, I’ll arrive 10 minutes early to every training session for additional stretching.”

### 3. Guided Visualization (12 minutes)

#### Preparation:

- The coach introduces the exercise and asks athletes to sit or lie down comfortably, close their eyes, and slow their breathing.

#### Introduction:

“Imagine yourself at training or in a competition... You’re on the field. Everything is familiar. Your body is ready, your mind is calm... You’re focused, in control of every movement. You breathe deeply. You hear sounds around you, feel the ground under your feet...”

#### Flow:

The coach leads athletes through a mental image of a successful performance, including:

- Confidence before entering
- Focus in key moments
- Calmness after a mistake
- Satisfaction after the performance

Duration: 8-10 minutes

### 4. Short Reflection (3 minutes)

The coach asks:

- “How did you feel during the visualization?”
- “Did it help to imagine success before achieving it?”
- “Can you see yourself using this before each training or competition?”

Athletes can write down 1-2 impressions or emotions from the visualization.

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- A clearer vision of their athletic path and progress
- Stronger motivation and internal focus
- A visualization technique they can use before every performance
- Better emotional preparation for high-pressure situations

## Coach Recommendations:

- Use visualization before important matches, tournaments, or evaluations.
- Encourage athletes to write down and track their goals weekly.
- Regularly remind the team of their goals – integrate them into the training plan.

# WORKSHOP 8: GOAL-SETTING AND VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

**Timing:** At the end of training – the ideal time to reflect on daily habits and their impact on recovery, energy, and mental health.

**Duration:** 20 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Raise awareness about the importance of consistent and healthy daily habits.
- Encourage athletes to independently develop routines that help them maintain balance.
- Connect everyday habits with performance and psychological stability.

## Coach's Role:

Through concrete examples, the coach helps athletes understand how small daily habits make a big difference.

The key is to create a non-judgmental atmosphere in which athletes can honestly assess their routines and the changes they wish to make.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: Why Are Habits Important? (5 minutes)

The coach starts with a short story or example:

“The greatest athletes aren’t the best just because of talent – but because of consistency. The small things they do every day – sleep, nutrition, stretching, mental focus – make a huge difference.”

Then the coach asks:

- “Which habits help you perform better?”
- “And which ones might be holding you back?”

Write several responses on the board to help athletes visualize the impact.

### 2. Exercise: My Ideal Day (10 minutes)

#### Task:

Each athlete receives a paper with a timeline from waking up to going to bed. On this timeline, they mark:

- Activities they currently do that help them (e.g., breakfast, stretching, early dinner, reading before bed)
- Activities that distract or hinder them (e.g., late phone use, skipping meals, chaotic schedules)
- Activities they want to introduce (e.g., 10 minutes of meditation, more sleep, daily planning)

Coach's note:

“You don’t have to change everything at once. Start with one or two small habits that help you feel better and stay more focused.”

### 3. Group Sharing (3 minutes)

Athletes split into pairs or small groups (3–4 people) and share:

- One healthy habit they already have
- One habit they want to introduce in the next 7 days

Encourage mutual support and motivation – you can even suggest a challenge:

“Who will stick to their habit for the entire week?”

### 4. Conclusion and Motivation (2 minutes)

The coach closes with:

“Habits build your results. You don’t need to be perfect – just consistent. One good habit a day is like a brick in the wall of your career.”

As a final task, athletes write down on paper:

“One habit I’m starting TODAY is: \_\_\_\_\_”

### What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- A clearer picture of what their day looks like and where there’s room for improvement
- Motivation to introduce small but important changes
- A connection between daily life and athletic performance
- A sense of control over their physical and mental well-being

## Coach Recommendations:

- Follow up with athletes on their new habits – ask during the week how it's going.
- Encourage mini routines before/after training (e.g., 3 minutes of silence, quick stretching, hydration).
- Repeat this exercise occasionally throughout the season – habits fade without conscious reinforcement.

# WORKSHOP 9: COPING STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH UNPLEASANT EMOTIONS

**Timing:** At the end of training – when athletes are physically relaxed and more open to emotional topics.

**Duration:** 25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Help athletes recognize and name uncomfortable emotions.
- Teach healthy coping strategies (instead of suppression or emotional outbursts).
- Develop emotional resilience and self-regulation.

## Coach's Role:

The coach should clearly emphasize that emotions are normal and do not indicate weakness. Their role is to guide the athletes through a safe and supportive conversation and offer practical tools for everyday challenges.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What Are Uncomfortable Emotions and Why Do They Matter? (5 minutes)

The coach asks the group:

“Have you ever felt anger, nervousness, or sadness before a game, training, or after a loss?”

“How did you react? Did you suppress it or express it in a healthy way?”

After a brief discussion, the coach explains:

“Emotions aren’t good or bad – they’re messages. If we recognize and accept them, we can control them. If we ignore them, they’ll control us.”

On the board, the coach can write:

Sadness – Anxiety – Anger – Frustration – Guilt – Fear

### 2. Exercise: Emotion Journal (8 minutes)

#### Task:

Each athlete receives a paper with 3 questions:

1. What uncomfortable emotion have I felt most often this week?
2. When does it usually occur (before training, after a loss, due to failure...)?
3. How do I usually react – and how would I like to react instead?

#### Goal:

To recognize personal emotional patterns and reflect on healthier coping responses.

#### Optional:

Athletes may share their examples with the group (voluntarily).

### **3. Exercise: My Emotional Toolbox (10 minutes)**

#### **Instructions:**

The coach says:

“Now we’ll create our own personal toolbox for calming down when emotions overwhelm us. Something we can use right away.”

Athletes choose or create 3 strategies that work for them:

- Deep breathing (e.g., 4-4-4 breathing)
- Taking a break or stepping back (physically or mentally)
- Talking to someone they trust
- Writing thoughts in a journal
- Physical activity (light jogging, stretching)
- Visualization of a positive scenario
- Self-support statement: “It’s okay to feel this. It will pass.”

Each athlete writes down their “toolbox” on paper and keeps it (e.g., in their bag or locker as a reminder).

### **4. Conclusion and Reflection (2 minutes)**

The coach asks:

- “How did it feel to reflect on your emotions?”
- “Which strategy seems most helpful to you?”
- “Have you used something like this in stressful moments before?”

The coach closes with a message:

“Being strong doesn’t mean not feeling – it means knowing how to recognize an emotion and manage it. That’s your mental strength.”

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- Emotional self-regulation skills
- Greater emotional literacy – they can name what they feel
- Personal strategies for calming and overcoming emotional challenges
- Fewer impulsive reactions and more internal control in sport and daily life

## Coach Recommendations:

- Encourage regular emotional reflection, e.g., at the end of a week or tournament.
- If you notice someone experiencing strong emotions regularly, approach them supportively.
- Regularly remind the team: emotions are not weakness – they are signals.

# WORKSHOP 10: VISUAL IMAGERY AND VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

**Timing:** Before training – the ideal time to activate mental focus and prepare athletes for optimal engagement.

**Duration:** 20 minutes

## **Workshop Objectives:**

- Develop the skill of using visualization to enhance sports performance.
- Increase confidence by mentally “rehearsing” a successful training or match.
- Reduce anxiety and nervousness before important situations.

## **Coach’s Role:**

The coach leads athletes through a calm and guided visualization exercise. Ideally, the coach practices the session beforehand in order to lead the group with a soothing voice, rhythm, and tone that creates a relaxed yet focused atmosphere.

## **Workshop Description – Step by Step:**

### **1. Introduction: What Is Visualization and What Is It For? (5 minutes)**

The coach explains:

“Visualization means mentally imagining – in vivid detail – how we perform something successfully. Top-level athletes use visualization regularly to prepare both the body and mind for success.”

#### **Benefits of visualization:**

- Improved technical performance
- Reduced nervousness
- Increased confidence
- Better stress management

#### **Key point:**

The brain doesn't distinguish between real and vividly imagined experiences – if the mental image is clear and emotionally charged, it has a powerful effect.

### **2. Guided Visualization: Successful Performance (10 minutes)**

#### **Preparation:**

- Athletes sit or lie down quietly, with their eyes closed.
- The coach guides them through a calm, focused mental image of an ideal performance:

“Take a deep breath... Exhale slowly... You are on the field. Everything feels familiar. Your body is ready. There is lightness in your movements... You are focused... you hear the sounds... see the audience... feel the firmness of the ground beneath your feet...”

“Now your moment arrives... you move with ease... your body knows exactly what to do... everything flows smoothly...”

“A sense of control and confidence fills you. You belong here. This is your space.”

Note: Include multiple senses (sight, sound, physical sensations) and positive emotions (confidence, satisfaction, focus).

### **3. Reflection (3 minutes)**

After the visualization, athletes briefly write down or share aloud:

- “What did I feel during the visualization?”
- “Which part helped me feel most prepared?”
- “Can I use this technique before a match, exam, or important conversation?”

The coach encourages athletes to recognize visualization as a personal tool they can use anytime, anywhere.

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- Mental preparation for demanding situations
- Stronger mental image of success
- Reduced anxiety and physical tension
- Greater trust in their own abilities
- Better execution of technical and tactical skills

## Coach Recommendations:

- Encourage athletes to use visualization regularly – e.g., in the morning, before training, or before an important match.
- Combine visualization with breathing or light stretching.
- In later phases, include challenging scenarios (e.g., making a mistake – how do you regain focus?)

# WORKSHOP II: BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

**Timing:** At the end of training – the ideal time when athletes are more emotionally open and reflective.

**Duration:** 25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Distinguish between self-confidence and self-respect.
- Develop internal sources of security and self-worth.
- Strengthen awareness of personal strengths that aren't tied solely to performance or results.

## Coach's Role:

The coach encourages athletes to focus on their qualities and efforts, not just outcomes (win/loss). This workshop helps them build a stable and internally grounded sense of confidence.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What Are Self-Confidence and Self-Respect? (5 minutes)

The coach briefly explains:

- Self-confidence = belief in one's ability to do something (skill, performance)
- Self-respect = how I value myself as a person, regardless of outcome

“I can have a bad day and miss a penalty – but that doesn't make me less worthy as a person.”

Reflection questions:

- “Is your confidence dependent on results?”
- “What do you think of yourself when you make a mistake?”

### 2. Exercise: My Three Inner Strengths (7 minutes)

**Task:**

Each athlete writes down 3 personal qualities or strengths they're proud of, unrelated to sports results.

Examples:

- Persistence
- Friendship
- Humor
- Responsibility
- Courage in tough situations
- Willingness to help others

## Sharing:

Athletes then pair up and share:

- “Which of your traits helps you both on and off the field?”
- “How do you know you have this trait? When has it been most helpful to you?”

## 3. Exercise: The Mirror of Support (10 minutes)

### Execution:

- Athletes stand or sit in a circle.
- Each person says to the person on their left:
  - “I appreciate that you are \_\_.”
  - “Your strength is \_\_.”

This continues around the circle until everyone has received encouragement from a teammate.

Alternative for quieter groups:

Instead of speaking, each athlete can write a compliment on paper and give it to their partner.

## 4. Final Reflection (3 minutes)

The coach asks:

- “How did it feel to give and receive praise?”
- “Did it remind you of something you often forget about yourself?”
- “How do we build confidence when things don’t go as planned?”

Coach’s closing message:

“Your worth is not measured by your results. Build your self-worth on who you are, not just what you achieve.”

## Sharing:

Athletes then pair up and share:

- “Which of your traits helps you both on and off the field?”
- “How do you know you have this trait? When has it been most helpful to you?”

## 3. Exercise: The Mirror of Support (10 minutes)

### Execution:

- Athletes stand or sit in a circle.
- Each person says to the person on their left:
  - “I appreciate that you are \_\_.”
  - “Your strength is \_\_.”

This continues around the circle until everyone has received encouragement from a teammate.

Alternative for quieter groups:

Instead of speaking, each athlete can write a compliment on paper and give it to their partner.

## 4. Final Reflection (3 minutes)

The coach asks:

- “How did it feel to give and receive praise?”
- “Did it remind you of something you often forget about yourself?”
- “How do we build confidence when things don’t go as planned?”

### Coach’s closing message:

“Your worth is not measured by your results. Build your self-worth on who you are, not just what you achieve.”

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- A stronger internal sense of security and self-worth
- A realistic and healthy self-image
- Ability to separate mistakes from personal identity
- Increased resilience to external pressure and criticism

## Coach Recommendations:

- Praise effort and character traits, not just outcomes (e.g., “I admire your perseverance,” not only “you won today”).
- Encourage athletes to keep a “strength journal” – regularly noting their positive behaviors and qualities.
- Create regular moments of team support and recognition.

# WORKSHOP 12: COPING WITH FAILURE AND RESILIENCE-BUILDING

**Timing:** At the end of training – when athletes are more physically relaxed and open to reflecting on challenging experiences.

**Duration:** 25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Help athletes shift their perception of failure—from a threat to an opportunity for growth.
- Develop resilience as the ability to bounce back after mistakes, defeats, and difficult periods.
- Reinforce the mindset: “Failure doesn’t define me—it builds me.”

## Coach’s Role:

The coach should be honest and authentic—sharing a personal example of failure and what they learned from it. It’s important to emphasize that mistakes and defeats are not the end, but a crucial part of both sports and life.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What is Resilience and Why Does It Matter? (5 minutes)

The coach asks athletes:

- “How do you feel when you lose or make a mistake?”
- “What do you usually do—withdraw, get angry, blame yourself or others?”
- “Do you believe failure can make you better?”

Then the coach explains:

“Resilience means the ability to rise after a fall. The sooner we accept mistakes as a natural part of the journey, the quicker we recover—and grow stronger.”

### 2. Exercise: My Failure Story (7 minutes)

#### Task:

Athletes reflect on a situation where they:

- Experienced failure, defeat, a mistake, or disappointment
- Felt shame, sadness, or frustration
- But later learned something from it

Each athlete fills out a short questionnaire:

1. What happened?
2. How did I feel at the time?
3. What did I learn from it?
4. What would I do differently today?

Volunteers can share their story with the group. The coach encourages authenticity and respectful listening.

### 3. Exercise: My Resilience Plan (10 minutes)

#### Task:

Athletes create a personal plan for resilience—what they will do the next time they fail or lose.

#### Examples of strategies:

- I won't insult myself—I accept I made a mistake, but I still have value.
- I will talk to someone I trust.
- I'll take a 10-minute break and reflect calmly.
- I'll look at what I can learn from the experience.
- I'll remind myself: "A mistake is not the end. It's just one step."

Each athlete writes down 2–3 personal strategies.

### 4. Final Message and Reflection (3 minutes)

The coach closes with a message of encouragement:

"The most successful athletes are not the ones who never make mistakes, but the ones who know how to come back stronger. Mistakes don't define you—your response to them does."

#### Reflection questions:

- "What message do you want to give yourself when you make a mistake?"
- "What can you rely on when things don't go as planned?"

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- A new, healthier perspective on failure
- Personal tools for faster mental recovery after defeat
- Greater emotional resilience
- A sense of control and responsibility during difficult times

## Coach Recommendations:

- Talk openly about mistakes—normalize them as part of the process
- Encourage the team to learn from errors rather than judge them
- Revisit this exercise periodically, especially after losses, big games, or disappointments

# WORKSHOP 13: STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

**Timing:** Before training – so athletes can immediately apply the learned techniques, especially in high-pressure or demanding situations.

**Duration:** 20–25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Help athletes recognize their own stress responses.
- Teach and practice specific techniques to reduce and manage stress.
- Strengthen resilience in stressful situations such as competitions, uncertainty, or conflict.

## Coach's Role:

Through practical examples, the coach helps athletes become aware of what causes them stress and offers concrete tools they can use immediately. It's essential to encourage athletes not to wait for stress to build up, but to use these techniques preventively.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What Is Stress and How to Recognize It? (5 minutes)

The coach asks:

- “How do you know you’re stressed?”
- “What happens in your body, behavior, or thoughts?”
- “When does it hit you the hardest?”

The coach explains:

“Stress isn’t bad by itself—it’s the body’s natural response to challenge. The key is learning to recognize it early and restore balance to body and mind.”

On the board, write the three levels of stress responses:

- Body: tension, rapid breathing, sweating
- Mind: worries, catastrophic thinking, loss of focus
- Behavior: withdrawal, irritability, impulsive reactions

### 2. Exercise: Short Self-Assessment of Stress (3 minutes)

Athletes fill out a short questionnaire:

1. What causes me the most stress in sports?
2. How do I usually react when I’m stressed?
3. What has helped me calm down so far?

(This serves as a warm-up for the technique they will practice next.)

### 3. Practical Exercise: Calming Techniques (10 minutes)

The coach leads one or more of the following techniques:

- 4-4-4-4 Breathing (Box Breathing):
- Inhale 4 seconds, hold 4, exhale 4, pause 4 (repeat 4 times).
- Helps calm the nervous system within a minute.
- Body Focus:
- Short progressive relaxation: tense and relax muscles from feet to face.
- Brings awareness from the mind into the body.
- Quick Mental Break:
- Imagine a place where you feel completely safe and relaxed (beach, forest, room).
- Engage the senses - what do you see, hear, feel?

Athletes perform the exercise in silence while the coach guides them with their voice. At the end, they remain still with eyes closed for a moment of calm.

### 4. Final Task and Reflection (5-7 minutes)

**Task:** Each athlete writes:

- “My go-to stress management technique is: \_\_\_\_\_”
- “I will use it when I feel: \_\_\_\_\_” (e.g. tension before competition, irritability, loss of focus).

## Group reflection:

- “Which technique felt the most comfortable to you?”
- “Have you perhaps already used it, without realizing?”
- “Do you think you could use it in everyday situations?”

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- Ability to recognize their own stress signals
- Tools for quick calming and regaining focus
- Greater control over emotional and physical reactions
- The sense that they can manage stress—rather than stress managing them

## Coach Recommendations:

- Remind the team to practice even when they’re not stressed—so the technique becomes natural when needed most
- Introduce 2–3 minutes of breathing before important training sessions or competitions
- Encourage athletes to find the technique that works best for them—not every method fits everyone

# WORKSHOP 14: RECOGNIZING AND OVERCOMING MENTAL TRAPS (CBT)

**Timing:** At the end of training – when athletes are more reflective and able to connect thoughts and emotions.

**Duration:** 30 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Introduce athletes to the concept of cognitive distortions – “mental traps” that distort reality.
- Help them recognize harmful thinking patterns in everyday sports situations.
- Teach them how to replace negative thoughts with more helpful, realistic messages.

## Coach’s Role:

The coach supports athletes in learning not to believe every negative thought, but to analyze and challenge them.

## Key message:

“You don’t have to believe everything your mind tells you.”

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What Are Cognitive Distortions? (5 minutes)

The coach introduces the concept:

“Cognitive distortions are negative thinking patterns that distort reality. If we don’t recognize them, they can hold us back – especially in sports.”

#### Examples of common distortions:

DISTORTION	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE IN SPORTS
CATASTROPHIZING	“THE WORST WILL HAPPEN”	“IF I MISS THE PENALTY, I’M DONE.”
ALL-OR-NOTHING THINKING	IT’S EITHER PERFECT OR WORTHLESS	“EITHER I’M THE BEST, OR I’M TERRIBLE.”
PERSONALIZATION	EVERYTHING IS MY FAULT	“WE LOST BECAUSE OF ME.”
MENTAL FILTER	FOCUS ONLY ON THE NEGATIVE	“I MADE 10 GOOD PLAYS, BUT I ONLY REMEMBER THE ONE MISTAKE.”

**THE COACH CAN SHARE A PERSONAL EXAMPLE OR ONE FROM A FAMOUS ATHLETE.**

## 2. Exercise: Identify Your Trap (10 minutes)

### Task:

Athletes receive a list of common distortions and are asked to:

1. Highlight 1-2 they often notice in themselves.
2. Describe a situation during training or a match where they thought that way.

### Example entry:

- **Distortion:** Catastrophizing
- **Situation:** “The day before the match, I kept thinking I would mess everything up and disappoint the team.”

### Coach’s reminder:

“Thoughts are not facts. We can question them.”

## 3. Exercise: Replace the Thought (10 minutes)

### Task:

Each athlete selects one negative thought and tries to reframe it into a more helpful, realistic version.

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#### Task:

Each athlete selects one negative thought and tries to reframe it into a more helpful, realistic version.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT	HEALTHIER REFRAME
"I MESSED UP AGAIN, I'M TERRIBLE."	"EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES - THIS IS A CHANCE TO LEARN."
"IF I SCREW THIS UP, THEY WON'T RESPECT ME ANYMORE."	"ONE MISTAKE DOESN'T DEFINE MY WORTH."
"NOTHING'S GOING RIGHT FOR ME."	"IT'S A TOUGH DAY, BUT I'M STILL TRYING."

**ATHLETES WORK IN PAIRS, HELPING EACH OTHER FORMULATE MORE SUPPORTIVE THOUGHTS.**

## 4. Final Reflection and Closing Message (5 minutes)

Coach prompts discussion:

- “Which distortion traps you the most?”
- “How did it feel to change your thought?”
- “Can you imagine using this technique during training or a match?”

Closing statement from the coach:

“Your thoughts are powerful – but you are more powerful than your thoughts. Don’t believe the first negative sentence in your head. Challenge it.”

### What Do Athletes Gain from This Exercise?

- The ability to recognize negative thinking patterns
- Skills to challenge and reframe harmful thoughts
- Greater confidence and focus in stressful moments
- A stronger sense of control over their internal dialogue

### Coach Recommendations:

- Encourage athletes to keep a thought journal – writing down negative thoughts and their replacements.
- If you notice an athlete repeatedly falling into the same trap, use it as a chance for one-on-one conversation.
- Regularly repeat the message:  
“Thoughts are a tool – not the boss.”

# WORKSHOP 15: APPLYING LOGOTHERAPY TECHNIQUES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

**Timing:** At the end of training – when athletes are more relaxed and introspective, ready for deeper reflection on themselves and their experiences.

**Duration:** 30 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Help athletes find meaning in difficulties, injuries, defeats, and everyday sports challenges.
- Introduce simple logotherapy techniques they can use when feeling demotivated, lost, or in inner conflict.
- Foster resilience through deeper purpose and personal growth.

## Coach's Role:

The coach doesn't need to dive into philosophical or therapeutic depths of logotherapy. It's enough to guide the athletes' thinking and create space for personal reflection. The emphasis is on meaning, values, and intrinsic motivation.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

### 1. Introduction: What Is Logotherapy and Why Is It Useful in Sports? (5 minutes)

The coach briefly presents the idea of logotherapy:

“Logotherapy is a therapeutic approach that doesn’t ask ‘what do I expect from life’, but rather ‘what does life expect from me’. Viktor Frankl, who developed logotherapy under extreme conditions in a concentration camp, believed that humans can endure almost anything – if they know why.”

In sports, this means:

- Finding meaning even in injury, defeat, or hard training.
- Asking during tough times: “What can I learn? Who can benefit from my effort?”

### 2. Exercise: My Situation – My Meaning (10 minutes)

#### Task:

Athletes write (or think) about one challenging situation from their sports career, such as:

- An injury
- A long period of poor results
- Conflict within the team
- Disappointment or loss of motivation

Then they answer the following:

1. What did that situation take away from me?
2. What might it have brought me? (new insight, stronger character, empathy, new perspective)
3. What would I say to someone else going through the same thing?

### 3. Logotherapy Techniques in Practice (10 minutes)

The coach introduces two basic logotherapy tools:

**Dereflection:**

Instead of focusing on the problem (e.g., “I’m not good enough”), redirect attention to action and service to others.

Application in sports: Instead of “I have to succeed,” think “How can I help the team today?” or “How can I show effort?”

**Paradoxical Intention:**

When we fear something (e.g., performance anxiety), try to “intentionally command it.”

Example: “Today, I’ll definitely mess up!” – result: relaxation, because there’s no more resistance, only acceptance.

The coach can offer a fun example:

“Who wants to try – in the next drill, deliberately mess up a pass... and see what happens.”

(Usually the opposite happens – it relaxes the players.)

### 4. Final Reflection: What Gives Me Meaning in Sport? (5 minutes)

Athletes reflect quietly or share in a circle:

- Why do I train?
- What does this sport mean to me beyond results?
- Who can I be an example to through my effort?

## Coach concludes:

“When you know your *why*, you can endure any *how*. Sport isn’t just results – it’s a journey of personal growth. And when it’s tough, meaning keeps you going.”

## What Do Athletes Gain from This Workshop?

- A deeper sense of purpose in sport, even without external success
- The ability to find value in struggle and hardship
- Greater resilience and calm in difficult moments
- Motivation that comes from within, not just from outcomes

## Coach Recommendations:

- Encourage athletes to train even without external motivation – to build character.
- Keep repeating the question: “What can this challenge give you today?”
- When relevant, use the language of logotherapy: values, meaning, calling, serving the team.

# WORKSHOP 16: VISUAL IMAGERY AND VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

**Timing:** At the end of training – when the atmosphere is more relaxed and athletes are more open to sensitive topics.

**Duration:** 20–25 minutes

## Workshop Objectives:

- Raise awareness about the importance of mental health in sports.
- Break the stigma associated with seeking psychological support.
- Inform athletes when and how to reach out for help.

## Coach's Role:

The coach leads this session with clarity, compassion, and honesty. There's no need to “act like an expert” – just openly deliver the message that it's okay – and even encouraged – to ask for help when things get tough.

## Workshop Description – Step by Step:

1. Introduction: Mental Health Is as Important as Physical Health (5 minutes)

The coach begins with questions:

- “When a muscle or joint hurts, we go to a physiotherapist, right?”
- “But what if your head, thoughts, or heart hurt?”

## Key message:

“Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your body. Both are part of who you are. Being strong means knowing when you need support – and having the courage to ask for it.”

## 2. Myths and Truths About Seeking Help (5 minutes)

The coach presents common myths and counters them with facts:

MYTH	TRUTH
“IT’S FOR THE WEAK.”	STRENGTH IS RECOGNIZING YOU NEED SUPPORT.
“I HAVE TO SOLVE IT ALL MYSELF.”	NO ONE HAS TO CARRY EVERYTHING ALONE.
“PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE FOR ‘CRAZY’.”	PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE FOR PEOPLE - FOR GROWTH, UNDERSTANDING, AND DEVELOPMENT.

IF POSSIBLE, THE COACH CAN SHARE A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH SEEKING SUPPORT (E.G., A CONVERSATION WITH A MENTOR, COACH, OR PSYCHOLOGIST).

### 3. Exercise: Recognizing Signs You Might Need Support (5 minutes)

#### Task:

Athletes, individually or in groups, list signs that might indicate it's time to talk to someone:

- Persistent sadness, anxiety, or lack of motivation
- Sleep, eating, or concentration difficulties
- Excessive tension, irritability, withdrawal
- Feeling like “I can't do this anymore” or “nothing ever changes”

The coach explains:

“We all have tough days. But when those days start piling up and become a burden, it's time to ease that load - not suffer in silence.”

### 4. Information: Who to Turn to and How? (5 minutes)

The coach gives athletes clear support options:

- **Within the team/club:** psychologist, coach, parent, older teammate
- **Outside the team:** school counselor, youth center, sports psychologist, counseling centers
- **Anonymous help:** phone hotlines, online support platforms

*Bonus:* The coach can prepare and share a handout with mental health resources (local contacts, free helplines, websites).

## 5. Final Message (5 minutes)

The coach ends with a supportive and open message: “It’s important to know when you need training, rest – and also a conversation. Strength means recognizing your limits and knowing when to reach out for help. Mental health is not a luxury – it’s the foundation of both your sporting and personal success.”

Athletes can write down a sentence they want to remember or take with them, such as:

“It’s okay not to be okay – and even more okay to ask for help.”

## What Do Athletes Gain From This Workshop?

- Reduced shame and insecurity around asking for help
- Awareness of their emotional boundaries
- Knowledge of where and to whom they can turn in times of crisis
- A culture of openness and support within the team

## Coach Recommendations:

- Regularly mention mental health as part of the training process
- Be open and approachable – sometimes just listening makes a big difference
- Encourage athletes not to wait until they “break” – act at the first signs of discomfort