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Sport psychologists available for comment - Beijing 2008 Olympic Games

Sport psychologists play a crucial role in assisting our elite Australian athletes prepare psychologically for the Olympics.

The Australian Psychological Society has a number of expert sport psychologists available to comment on many aspects of the Olympics experience, including preparation, performance and coping with winning or losing.

The following table highlights some of the key topics/techniques that sport psychologists are available to comment on:

Topic	Description
Winning gold – it's all in the mind <i>Technique: Visualisation</i>	<p>Olympic athlete, Jana Rawlinson, has frequently been reported in the media commenting on the vital role visualisation plays in her training, particularly in the lead up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.</p> <p>Sport psychologists use visualisation to assist athletes to mentally rehearse their technique and envision what they would like to happen when they compete (i.e. see themselves winning gold). Visualisation can also be used to assist athletes with injury rehabilitation.</p>
Realising the Olympic dream – how do Aussie athletes stay motivated? <i>Technique: Goal setting</i>	<p>With gruelling training regimes, setbacks from injury/illness and training often spanning years, it can be difficult for some athletes to maintain focus and motivation.</p> <p>Sport psychologists work closely with athletes to identify their motivations and assist them to set goals. They use this information to help coaches create tailored training programs of rewards and challenges designed to maintain their motivation and inspire them to achieve their Olympic dream.</p>
When you're competing at the Olympics, mind matters <i>Technique: Association/disassociation</i>	<p>Elite athletes often switch between associative and disassociative states while competing. The timing of when athletes make the switch is crucial. For example, disassociation is often used by athletes to assist them to block out negatives, such as pressure from their competitors and pain. But, if an athlete disassociates for the whole time they are competing, they are likely to under perform.</p> <p>Sport psychologists work with athletes to assist them to determine when they should associate and disassociate, and techniques for helping achieve both states.</p>
Performing at their best – how do elite athletes 'get in the zone'? <i>Technique: Physical arousal</i>	<p>An athlete's physical arousal level can impact how they perform. For example, if their arousal levels are extremely low, they might not perform as well as they could.</p> <p>Sport psychologists work with athletes to determine their individual, optimum level of arousal for competition. Once identified, the psychologist works with the athlete on practicing techniques to regulate their arousal levels and help them to 'get in the zone' when they are competing.</p>
Mental toughness – how do athletes cope with the highs and lows of competing? <i>Technique: Coping with winning/losing</i>	<p>The impact of being de-selected, losing a race or not performing at their best can be difficult for some athletes to manage. Equally, managing the 'come down' after an event like the Olympics, even if you are successful, can present challenges.</p> <p>Sport psychologists play a crucial role in assisting athletes to wind down, deal with disappointment and get back to a normal routine after competing.</p>

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APS referral service: The Australian Psychological Society provides a free referral service for the general public, GPs and other health professionals who are seeking the advice and assistance of a qualified psychologist, online at www.psychology.org.au or call 1800 333 497.