



Confidence

Hi Wildcats,

In this edition of the “Mental Training” email series, we will discuss confidence. When interviewed after the 1992 Olympics, medal winners stated the number one thing they wanted to improve was their confidence. When I read this, it got me thinking: What is confidence? How come these Olympian medal winners, who I am sure have won

more than lost, do not feel confident about upcoming performances? I have spent many years studying confidence.

It is interesting that in the field of psychology and sport psychology that no true definition exists for confidence. So, I ask athletes all the time: “What is confidence?” The most common answer is

“knowing you are going to win.” But, if this is a complete definition, why is it that so many “confident” athletes fail.

For example, Michael Jordan said: “I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I’ve

been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

This led me to conclude that confidence is not about the outcome but rather the process and desire. Confident athletes, like Michael Jordan, aren’t thinking “I am going to

make the basket.” Rather, they think, “I want to BE THE ONE WHO HAS THE OPPORTUNITY to make the basket. More importantly, confident athletes do not fear failure. They accept it is a part of the game. In other words, they don’t know with certainty that they will succeed but they would rather

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– Michael Jordan

try. The only guarantee in sports is missing 100% of the shots you don’t take.

Everything else has a mixture of success with failures. Thus, the mental aspect of confidence is best defined in Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem “If” when he writes:

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ARIZONA



“If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
and treat those two impostors just the same.
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it.”

sensations of confidence. Some of the
reported sensations are energized muscles,
a sense of “flow” in their sport, fluidity, steady



breathing, and so on.
One technique that is
effective in increasing
confidence is the
Confidence Induction
Technique (CIT).
CIT uses the physical
sensations from one’s
confident experience
to “turn off” the
physical sensations
one may feel prior
to their performance.
For example, I will
instruct an athlete
to recall their greatest
athletic performance.
Once they have

There is a second component to confidence
in addition to the mental aspect. It is the
physiological aspect or the way your body feels
when it is confident. Throughout my studies,
I have attempted to identify the physical

identified every sensation (sight, sound, touch,
taste, and smell), the athlete is instructed
to replace the feelings associated with fear
(such as tense muscles, panicky heart rate,
etc.) with the confidence sensations.

If you would like to feel more confident; if you would like to develop a personalized
Confidence Induction Technique; if you would like to discuss other techniques for
anxiety; meet and discuss other benefits of sport and clinical psychology; or if you
are feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed out, frustrated, worried, or sad, please
contact Angie at 621-8805 or ask your athletic trainer to schedule an appointment.
I look forward to working with you.

To schedule an appointment, call
621-8805, 621-3334, or ask your
athletic trainer for assistance.

Best Wishes,
Scott Goldman, Ph.D.

*Sport and Clinical Psychologist
for Student-Athletes*

BEAR DOWN