



Sport • Psych news



Slump Busting

Hi Wildcats,

In the this edition of the “Mental Training” email series, we will discuss the misperception of streaks and slumps as well as provide some slump busting techniques. Slumps as well as hot streaks are a natural part of sport. It is important to note streaks and slumps are not mysterious, unpredictable events. Rather, they can be analyzed and assessed.

For example, Thomas Gilovich studied what he called the “Hot Hand in Streak Shooters.” Gilovich interviewed basketball fans and professional athletes. Ninety-one percent of these individuals believed that a player has “a better chance of making a shot after having just made his last two or three attempts than he does after having just missed his last two or three shots.” He then completed

a second study where he followed the Philadelphia 76ers basketball team and recorded made shots and missed shots for the 1980-81 season. The results may surprise you. He discovered that any shot attempted after a series of successful shots had the same probability of going in as any shot attempted after a series of unsuccessful shots. In other words, one’s immediate history of performance had no impact on their current attempt. The confident athlete just keeps on shooting. Here is another way to think about this: Casino’s



have a game called roulette. Essentially, it is a game where a ball is spun around a wheel of numbers. The object of the game is to predict what number the ball lands on. Most casinos will have an electronic board that will show the previous spin results. For example, the board may show you that the last few spins landed on the numbers “15,” “5,” and “10.”

Casinos have only one objective – to make money – by taking your money. So, why would they have a board that shows you the past spins? When asked, most gamblers think such a board is helpful. What reason would the casino have for “helping” the gambler? The answer is: none! So, why do they have the board? They have it because they are taking advantage of the tendency to think like the aforementioned basketball fans and players.

Specifically, we as humans mistakenly believe that where the ball landed over the past few spins has some relevance to the current spin. Guess what? It doesn’t! So, Casinos laugh all the way to the bank as they watch gamblers looking at the board and make their bet. Similarly, believing how many shots you just made or missed impacts the shot you are about to make is just as foolish. Thus, the easiest way to get out of a slump is to keep on shooting.

ARIZONA



In his book *Sports Slump Busting: 10 Steps to Mental Toughness and Peak Performance* (1998), Alan Goldberg outlined 7 principles as well as 10 steps to slump busting. I will attempt to summarize his major points. Goldberg's seven principles are:

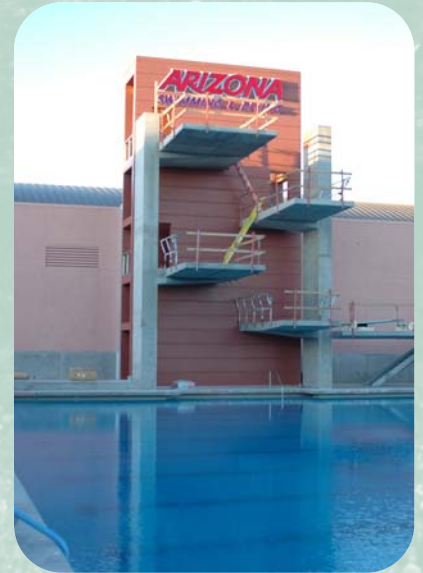
- 1 Passion and Fun**
Passion comes before peak performance.
- 2 High Self-Confidence**
Believe in your ability to achieve the task in front of you.
- 3 Concentration on the Process of Performance**
- 4 Resilience**
Never stop, never give up. The momentum pendulum will eventually swing in your favor.
- 5 A Sense of Challenge**
If it were easy, it wouldn't be fun. Embrace the challenge.
- 6 A Non-thinking, Automatic Quality**
There is a time to think and a time to just do.
Performance is best when automatic and without thought.
- 7 A Sense of Relaxation and Performance**
Having an ideal state of arousal is key to performing well.





Goldberg incorporates these 7 principles into 10 steps for slump busting. The 10 steps are:

- 1 Rule out Non-mental Causes:**
Eliminate other rationales for your current hardships. This may include physical (i.e., injury and conditioning), technical (i.e., form and mechanics); and tactical (strategy) mistakes.
- 2 Establish Self-Control:**
Assess the productivity of your attitude and thoughts. If you are thinking ideas that are self-defeating, ask yourself-how does thinking this way help? If it doesn't help, use other thoughts that are more effective.
- 3 Develop a Here and Now Focus:**
Remember the roulette wheel example.
Nothing matters more than the present task.
- 4 Deal with Your Fears:**
Everyone has moments of doubt and anticipation of future "catastrophes." However, it is important to face your fears and challenge yourself to overcome them. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do."
- 5 Expect Success:**
Stop negative thinking; it doesn't help. Believe in your ability to achieve success. Think about what you have done to be successful, how often you practiced and how hard you trained.
- 6 Develop positive images:**
Research has shown that visualizing yourself achieve success helps people achieve it. For example, a study was performed where golfers imagined sinking the putt or putting 1 foot short of the cup. The golfers who imagined sinking the putt got significantly closer to the cup.
- 7 Set Slump Busting Goals:**
Make sure your goals are about the process (i.e., four good passes), which is controllable, not the outcome (i.e., winning a game) which is not.
- 8 Build Self-Confidence:**
Remember the Mental Training email about confidence and how to create it.
- 9 Become Mentally Tough:**
Failing is inevitable. How you deal with failing is vital. When you struggle see it as an opportunity to learn.
- 10 Ensure Against Future Slumps:**
Develop mental routines, practice mental skills. They are just as important as the work you do to remain in physical shape.



If you would like some assistance in busting out of a slump; if you would like to feel more confident; if you would like to discuss other techniques for anxiety; if you would like to meet and discuss other benefits of sport and clinical psychology; or if you are feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, stressed out, frustrated, worried, sad, or lacking confidence, 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*

WILDCATS