Workshop for University dance team as a preparation for upcoming competitions

Section I

After the theoretical part of learning during MSc program in Sport psychology, it is essential to develop the ability of connecting the theory with applied practice. I believe it is not important whether you want to pursue academic career or applied work career, but it is crucial to have knowledge about research that has been conducted so far as well as understanding of applied work and what is necessary in order to train athletes to perform at their best.

At the beginning of the semester I decided to work with a university dance team. I have been a dancer myself my whole life therefore I understand every aspect of this discipline. I joined the team and started to train with them as a regular member. Prior to engaging in any sport psychology activities with the club I needed to know more about my weaknesses and strengths as a person and a student. I undertook personality assessment and learning styles indicator. I hoped to find out what I need to improve not only for this assignment but for the whole MSc program and possibly a future career. I undertook a similar test few years ago during my undergraduate studies while studying law and the result revealed that my personality was suitable for work with people, but I was too idealistic, and I was not willing to change my opinion that further in my career could lead to struggling with authorities and rules. I tried to work on that, so I was curious to take the personality test again.

<u>Personality assessment</u>

To asses my personality I undertook The Type Dynamic Indicator. The Type Dynamic Indicator is a Jungian Type Indicator because it is based on Carl Jung´s work (BPS, 2000-2018). Jungian approach to personality recognizes 4 preference pairs:

1. Extraversion – Introversion
2. Sensing - Intuition
3. Thinking – Feeling
4. Judging – Perceiving

Based on the preferences, test takers are divided into 16 types. The primary purpose of this assessment is not to categorize the type of personality but to inform people about different aspects of their personality and give insight into the preferences of behaviour to become more behaviourally flexible.

Although it is one of the most popular tools, it is not without its critics. There is a number of psychometric limitations which raise concerns about its use (Boyle, 1995). Research on the factor analysis has not showed convincing results, in addition authors concluded that the factors found in statistical analysis were inconsistent with the theory (Pittenger, 1993).

The results of my assessment are provided below:

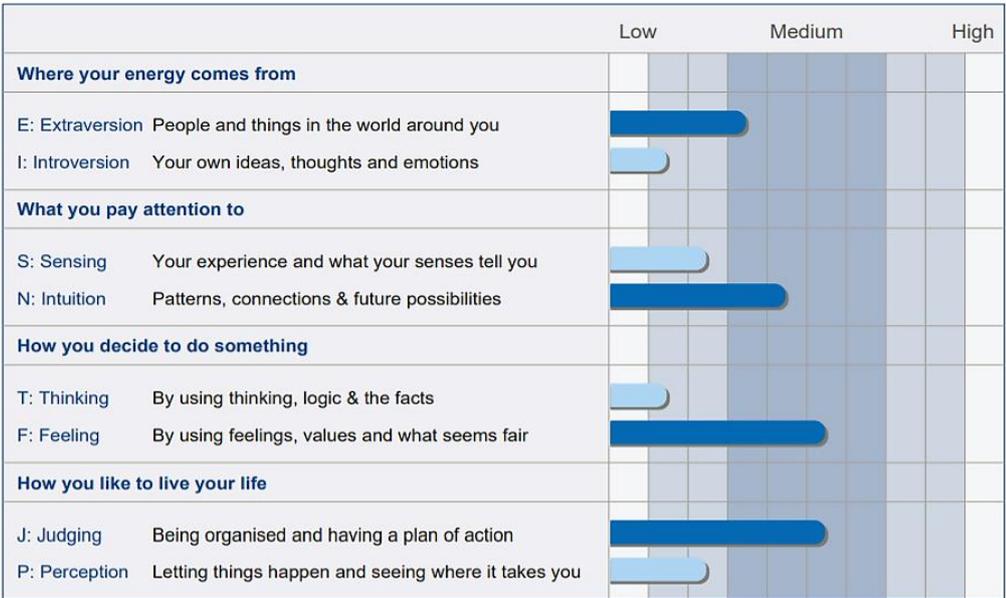|		Low	Medium	High
Where your energy comes from				
E: Extraversion	People and things in the world around you			
I: Introversion	Your own ideas, thoughts and emotions			
What you pay attention to				
S: Sensing	Your experience and what your senses tell you			
N: Intuition	Patterns, connections & future possibilities			
How you decide to do something				
T: Thinking	By using thinking, logic & the facts			
F: Feeling	By using feelings, values and what seems fair			
How you like to live your life				
J: Judging	Being organised and having a plan of action			
P: Perception	Letting things happen and seeing where it takes you			

Table 1: Results of Type Dynamic Indicator

The result of the assessment revealed my type of personality as the "Adviser". Advisers are described as enthusiastic, personable and responsive. Advisers value relationships and commitment to people, they are very expressive and creative, especially in groups. Advisors seek work that has meaning and purpose and involves interaction with people. They, however, need to
be more accepting when people do not share same opinions and values. They also lack orientation on specificity and detail. Advisers need to give greater attention to hard facts and evidence. I agree that I am happy to work with people and in groups and it seems I have not learnt how to accept

other people´s opinion and that there is still room for progress. The essential area for improvement is being more focused on theory and detail.

Learning Styles assessment

Learning is defined by Kolb (1984) as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". The Oxford dictionary describes learning as a broader concept: "The acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught". Everyone has different preferences when it comes to learning styles. Some people prefer to work with concrete information and data while others need "hands on" experience. According to the assessment, there are four types of learning styles: clarifier, innovator, activator and explorer. Each style has its own characteristics, everyone prefers one of the styles, but it does not mean they cannot take the advantage of other styles.

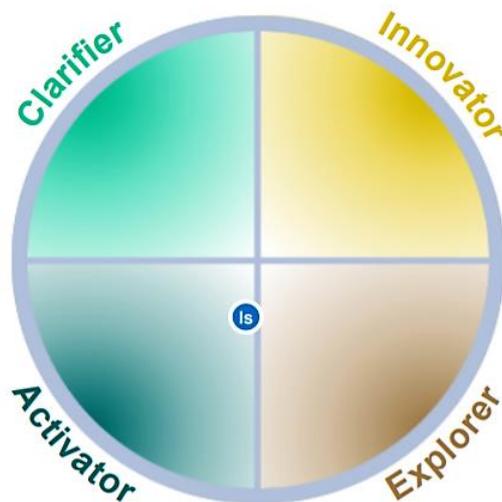The result of my assessment is shown below:

Figure 2: Results of learning styles indicator

The result of my assessment revealed that my preference is the "Activator". Even though I prefer the Activator style I am close to the Explorer, which means my less preferred learning styles are the Clarifier and the Innovator. Activators learn through experience, they are practical, decisive and with a drive to get results quickly. Explorers focus on the bigger picture rather than details, they are creative, flexible and they get inspiration easily. I can relate to these results, I like to learn through experience more than through structured and systematic learning. I know I tend to jump to conclusions immediately without researching and thinking about it. I focus on a bigger picture and forget about details, which can make a huge difference. I also struggle to focus on one thing as my brain generates a lot of ideas every second. This assessment revealed a lot of areas I need to improve at especially in academic settings.

Goals and Action plan

Based on the results of these two tests and my personal judgment I set up goals and divided them into two groups: Public engagement activity and MSc program. In order to set up goals I utilized SMART goals technique.

Goal is defined as "the object to which effort or ambition is directed". A goal is a description of an intended future state and an action performed to achieve that (Day, 2011). The most effective way to set up goals is SMART framework: goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based (Doran, 1981). For this assignment I will emphasize the plan I created for Public engagement activity. I put goals into three timeframes:

- prior to activity,
- during the activity
- after the activity.

Before organizing the workshop and talking in front of the audience, it was important for me to learn as much as possible about relevant topics. I wanted to be able to prepare the presentation and be able to answer any questions. Another goal was to improve my guided imagery skills. I am not a native speaker and I realize I tend to speak fast and I my accent can be very strong for some people.

Goal	Timeframe	Outcome
Gain a deep knowledge about the topic and be able to use it in applied setting	Prior to activity	• Learn about the topic – preparation for classes, articles, books • Work on the assignments about relevant topics • Find the connection between theory and practice
Learn how to deliver effective imagery script	Prior to activity	• Practice imagery scripts with friends • Learn from feedback • Listen to examples of imagery scripts
Gain confidence in my presenting abilities	Prior to activity	• Practice during classes • Present in front of friends and classmates
Gain confidence in my knowledge	During the activity	• Develop confidence in presenting information • Develop confidence in answering questions
Accept feedback and different opinions	After the activity	• Carefully listen to feedback, take notes and think about ways how to improve next time • Welcome different opinions about the way to deliver a workshop

Summary

I hoped to learn as much about the topic as possible as I would like to organize workshops for dancers in the future. I also hoped to enhance my presentation skills to become more confident English speaker. I think I am a fairly good presenter in Czech, so I would like to develop the same ability in English. The ultimate goal is to create fun and informative workshop that will be full of useful information people will enjoy.

Section II

Introduction

For my public engagement activity, I chose to work with university dance club and deliver a workshop about use of imagery as a preparation for competitions. I joined the club in September as a regular member. The club offers different dance styles classes. At the end of November, the committee selects a competitive team with trainings beginning in January. I approached the committee of the dance club at the beginning of the year and we agreed that the best time to organize a workshop is two weeks before first competition held in March. I was part of the team for several months, so it was easier to prepare for the workshop as I knew the members of competitive teams and their teachers. The team consisted of five sub teams for each dance style but some of the dancers were members of more than one team. The dance club has only female dancers. Some of the dancers used to compete when they were young but there was a group of first time competitors as well.

My first meeting about the workshop with the club took place at the beginning on January when the team had the first official session to discuss music and choreography for upcoming competitions. As an experienced dancer and a dance teacher I immediately noticed low cohesion of the team. I talked to the team president and she assured me that after the intensive training week it changes and improves a lot. The team also organizes socials to make sure everyone is involved, and the team works well together. Receiving this information, I suggested to prepare a workshop about pre-performance routines to lower anxiety and avoid stage fright as anxiety and stage fright occurs very often especially in dancers with little experience.

I decided to structure the workshop as follows:

- begin with a relaxing guided imagery,
- talk about the purpose and the benefits of imagery,
- open discussion and time for answering questions,
- end with guided imagery to deal with pre-competitive anxiety.

Preparation for the session

To achieve my goals, I started to practice guided imagery scripts with my roommates. None of them are dancers or athletes so I chose general topics. The length of practice scripts was around ten minutes. I was focusing on clear and slow pronunciation. I was not doing very well at the beginning as they very complaining I was talking too fast and it was difficult to follow. After couple practice scripts I managed to slow down, and they noticed the improvement. I gained more confidence and after these small sessions I felt ready. The second part of my goal was to gain deep knowledge about the topic. I was preparing mostly by working on my assignments as some of the topics I was writing about were related to anxiety, pre-performance routines and imagery. I am not nervous when I am supposed to talk in front of people as I was a dance teacher for many years and I was trained to become a lawyer during my undergraduate studies. However, I am always worried that I will forget what I want to say or that I will not know the answers to the questions from the audience. I wanted to be ready for possible questions, so I wrote reasons why I was anxious before the performance, why someone else could be anxious and I also talked to my dancing friend to make sure I did not leave anything out. Subsequently I went through the reasons and I tried to answer possible questions for myself to evaluate whether I can answer these questions to my satisfaction or not. I also read a book called Dance imagery for Technique and Performance by Eric Franklin to gain knowledge from an experienced sport psychologist.

Description of the session

The workshop was supposed to take place in the usual training place with the whole competitive dance team, but we did not expect a snow storm to happen leading to closed university. I talked to dance team members and we decided to organize the workshop anyways as the first competition was scheduled week after and there was no time to move it to a different date. I changed it into an open session and invite other dancers to participate because many dancers could not arrive due to the weather. An interesting mix of dancers from different styles, competitive and non-

competitive settings confirmed their attendance. My plan was to deliver a guided imagery focused on muscle progression at the beginning but when I saw dancers who were coming I changed my mind in the end. I chose a guided imagery about flying on a cloud to connect more with everyone as I have never met some of the them before. I prepared a digital presentation about imagery. Usually the dance team practices in the space that is part of the Student Union. Unfortunately, due to the weather the Union was closed, and we had to use a different room with no access to technology. I found out about the situation the day before the session, so I had to improvise. I simplified the theory and printed it for everyone on the sheet of paper, so they could look at it and take it home with them afterwards. I arranged about 30 minutes for an open discussion about pre-performance anxiety. At the end of the session I planned to deliver a guided imagery to lower anxiety in general. That was another last-minute change, I prepared an imagery script about pre-performance anxiety, but half of the participants were from non-competitive settings.

The workshop

The workshop took place in the second studio the dance club uses for trainings. There is no furniture which allowed everyone to have enough space around. I welcomed everyone and briefly introduced myself. When I saw the participants, it reminded me my first class I taught as a Pilates teacher, many people who did not know what to expect from my class and who did not know me. I decided to improvise and use one of the method I developed as a Pilates teacher couple years ago. It is based on breathing techniques, relaxation and a clear mind. I explained the proper technique of different types of breathing and we warmed up the body by switching between the breathing techniques. We relaxed the muscles and I talked them through clearing their thoughts by visualizing putting everything into the box and storing that in their imaginary closet. After clearing the mind, I wanted everyone to think about a happy place and visualize emotions they want to feel while being at that place. It turned out to be a great idea, it helped me to connect with people and it also helped to boost my confidence because I started with something I have been doing for years and I was familiar with. We continued with the first imagery script. I delivered the imagery script about flying on the clouds. It took about ten minutes. I gave participants couple minutes to let it sink in and then I asked them how they felt. Most of them said it was their first experience with guided imagery but they enjoyed it as they were thinking only about the image and they were not distracted with their lives. I talked about the theory of imagery, mostly about PETTLEP based imagery because I felt that the most useful information for this group of dancers is the most effective method and how they can practice imagery on their own. After the imagery part I opened a discussion about pre-performance anxiety. I started with sharing my experience during my competitive career, how I felt,

what methods we used to lower anxiety and how my teachers dealt with the anxiety. I shared the most interesting and funny stories. I also tried to make them feel safe and make sure they feel comfortable to talk about their experience and their fears, feelings and worries by assuring them everything stays in the room. I think it worked as people opened up, shared their feelings and asked me for an advice how to effectively deal with different situations. I was worried about this part the most as I wanted to do my best by answering their questions correctly and providing helpful guidance. At the end of the session I delivered the second imagery script about lowering anxiety. I handed out prepared sheets where they could find the information I was talking about and both imagery scripts.

Summary

After the session I talked to the dance team captain. She liked the information received and she asked me to possibly organize another workshop prior to school performance focused mostly on pre-performance anxiety. This one would be held at the end of April, so it is not part of this activity. Even though I received mostly positive feedback, some people mentioned it was a lot of information in a short time and they would need more time or more sessions to really understand it.
I was satisfied with the workshop, especially because I had to change the content within 24 hours and I still managed to recreate the whole session. I also did not miss the technology, on the contrary, when I present in front of the audience in the room with a projector I look at the screen a lot to make sure I change slides correctly and as a support for the presented information. This way I was talking to the audience the whole time without distractions and it turned out appropriate for this kind of workshop.

However, next time I would change couple things:

- Inform the participants to wear comfortable and warm clothes for the part where they lay down on the floor
- Hand the sheets with the content after the first imagery script and leave a blank page for notes
- Choose imagery scripts that will be more different, after delivering both scripts, I felt they were too similar
- Prepare questions for participants to open the discussion part

Section III

After completing the activity, it was important to reflect whether I accomplished my goals. "Reflection on action is the retrospective contemplation of practice to uncover the knowledge used in a particular situation, by analysing and interpreting the information recalled. The reflective practitioner may speculate how the situation might have been handled differently and what other knowledge would have been helpful" (Burns and Bulman, 2000). Even though I learn mostly from experience, it is important for me to think how I could improve next time, otherwise I would not learn anything. To reflect on my goals, I used Gibbs´ Reflective Cycle (1988) method. Gibbs´ Reflective cycle helps to think systematically about the phases of an experience or an activity. In this section I will describe Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion and Action plan. Description and Feelings were covered in previous sections.
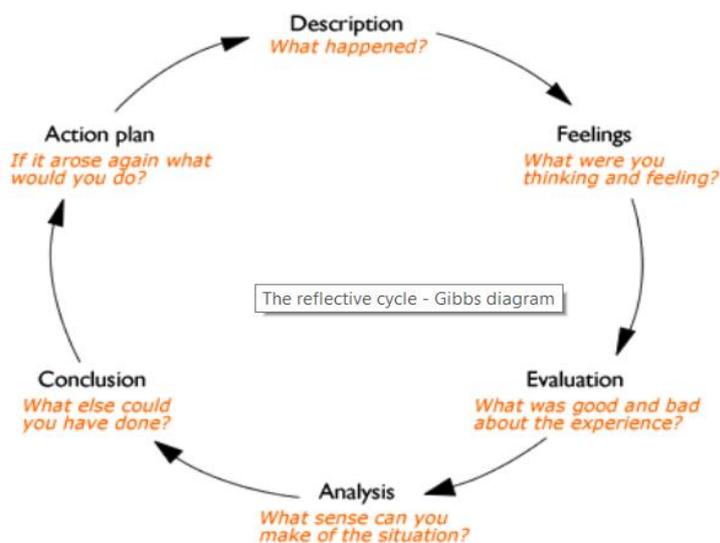

Table 3: Gibbs´ Reflective Cycle

Goal 1: Gain a deep knowledge about the topic and be able to use it in applied settings

One of my goals was to gain as much knowledge as possible about the topic. My workshop was around the topic of anxiety and dealing with anxiety. I chose to talk about imagery because I consider it one of the most effective method to lower anxiety in dancers. The area of imagery was familiar to me. I am a choreographer and I create the choreography in my head. However, I had no theoretical

background about the topic. I was writing a case study about imagery and pre-performance routines so alongside that I was working on my presentation for workshop. Through my learning and researching process I was able to gain enough knowledge to be confident to talk about it in front of the audience therefore my first goal was achieved.

Goal 2: Learn how to deliver effective imagery script

I set up this goal after the class of Applications of Sport psychology where each of us has a chance to practice guided imagery in front of the class. After delivering my script I was told I talk too fast and I need to focus on making enough pauses to give people time to create the image in their head. I was worried about this because I prepared two imagery scripts for the workshops. Couple weeks before the workshop my friends agreed to be my "test bunnies". I immediately received the same feedback I received during the class about my fast pace. I read articles with tips how to slow down and the most helpful advice was to write down marks when to breathe and pause to remind me that while reading the script. After several tries I managed to talk slowly naturally. In the morning of the workshop I sat down, closed my eyes and I imagined myself talking slowly, my own imagery preparation for led imagery session. I think I did well as I got positive feedback but this one is difficult to measure. There is always room for improvement.

Goal 3: Gain confidence in my presenting abilities

Together with previous goal I needed to build my confidence in my presenting abilities. I am not a native speaker and from time to time, mostly my friends in a good way make fun of my accent. I wanted to be more confident while talking so I took every opportunity to present in front of the class and I also practiced with my friends. I will never completely get rid of my accent, but I learnt to accept it. This goal is ongoing for the rest of my life but for the purpose of this activity, I achieved not to think about my accent during the presentation at all.

Goal 4: Gain confidence in my knowledge

The most difficult and challenging part of the activity for me was presenting gained knowledge and answering questions. The best way to fight this anxiety is to study hard and repeat everything many times. I created small cards with notes as a support in case I get lost. I read many books and articles about the topic to know as much as possible. I succeeded to achieve this goal. I did not have to look

at my cards during the presentation and I answered all of the questions. When I was not sure about the theory I used my experience and intuition.

Goal 5: Accept feedback and different opinions

The ability of accepting negative feedback is necessary. It is important to learn from mistakes and avoid them next time. When I was young I struggled to accept negative opinions especially about my dancing from my family, teachers and dance partners. Personality tests revealed that I might lack the ability to accept different opinions. In order to achieve this goal, I started to think about feedback as very positive and I always wrote down ways how to get better. When I started to practice guided imagery with my friends I wrote down their comments and researched how to get better in that area. When I talked to participants after the workshop I was happy to hear everything that was good and bad about the session. This might be my job one day and I want to be as good as possible.

Future target plan

I was always very interested in applied work and becoming a sport psychologist was the motivation to study MSc program in Sport psychology. This assignment proved me right that I feel more comfortable and confident in applied settings while working with people than in academic environment. I like conducting research and reading about the research so my goal number one for next couple years is to find a balance between applied work and research, or possibly leaning towards the applied practice. I enjoyed this opportunity to organize my own workshop and discover my strengths and weaknesses. I still need to work on my presenting skills and ability to talk about many different areas and not just the one I was focusing on. There is a lot of work ahead of me. I was given abilities and skills that enable me to work with people and help them in many areas of their lives, not just sport, naturally. However, if I am honest with myself I tend to lack discipline especially when it comes to studying. I will never be a good sport psychologist without deep knowledge of theory and research. This is the most important area for me to get better at.

In conclusion, this assignment was very helpful to realize what my future career should look like in an optimal situation and what the dream is.

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Imagery workshop

What is performance anxiety?

- performance anxiety = set of disorders that occur prior to performance and increase the chance of performing poorly

- female experience performance anxiety more often than males

- not all performers suffer the same degree of anxiety, differences are based on individual psychological characteristics

- anxiety is a multidimensional construct, that is divided into 3 elements: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and behavioural anxiety:

    1. cognitive anxiety refers to intense worries about the performance
    2. somatic anxiety is connected to physiological reactions such as nervousness and tension, also refers to physiological arousal states such as rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath or butterflies in the stomach
    3. behavioural anxiety refers to tense facial expressions, agitation and restlessness

- effective performance occurs when a performer executes complex motor skills in a flawless or near perfect manner, as opposite to optimal performance, maladaptive response to performance known as choking under pressure or stage fright can occur

What is stage fright?

- stage fright = feeling of nervousness one gets before a public speech, a recital, a dance performance, or a stage acting

- fear or anxiety aroused in an individual who performs in front of an audience or before a camera

- four parts of stage fright:

    1. anticipation is expectation of negative and unrealistic images of the performance
    2. avoidance is the desire to avoid doing the task.
    3. panic and anxiety are the symptoms experienced before the presentation in front of an audience.
    4. appraisal is the period of time after performance when the performer looks back on how the activity was done.

- the most common cause of stage fright is lack of self-confidence

- stage fright is a physiological reaction. When the body is presented with a stimulus; it triggers adrenaline, a bodily hormone -> when the adrenaline gets into the blood stream, there are side effects such as stomach pain, shaking, trembling, vomiting and shortness of breath

What are pre-performance routines?

- a pre-performance routine = sequence of task relevant thoughts and actions which an athlete engages in systematically prior to his or her performance of a specific sport skill

- pre-performance routines can help to improve focus, reduce anxiety and eliminate stage fright

Examples of pre-performance routine:

- checklist: may start the evening prior to their event and run directly up to the start, creating a checklist ensures athletes are prepared without having to devote extra energy to remembering tedious details

- mental Rehearsal, or imagery: a way for athletes to prepare for an event without physically practicing it

- diaphragmatic breathing: a pre-performance routine may be as simple as taking a few deep breaths from one's diaphragm to reduce muscle tension and focus on the task at hand

- listening to music: many athletes listen to music as part of their pre-performance routine to adjust their energy before competing

What is imagery?

- imagery = an experience that mimics real experience and involves using a combination of different sensory modalities in the absence of actual perception

- imagery is a psychological technique which has demonstrated its effectiveness in sport through positively affecting psychological states, such as decreasing anxiety and enhancing self-confidence, self-efficacy and concentration

- imagery is one of the most important methods for mental preparation of artists

- four main imagery theories have been developed in recent years:

  1. the neuromuscular model
  2. the cognitive account
  3. the bio-informational theory
  4. the PETTLEP approach

Why the PETTLEP model of imagery?

- PETTLEP is an acronym which stands for 7 key elements to include during imagery to create the most functionally equivalent image possible

- Physical – simulating the sensation of the event imagining

- Environment – if possible, image in the environment where the performance takes place e.g. dance studio

- Task – try to image details relevant to the task (e.g. attentional demands) and image at the appropriate level of expertise for the performer (i.e. a choreography or a difficult turn)

- Timing – the most functionally equivalent approach is to image in 'real time', but 'slow motion' imagery can be used to emphasize and perfect more difficult aspects of a skill

- Learning – the imagery should be continually adapted and reviewed over time to match changing task demands and the experience level of the athlete (the progress of dance skills)

- Emotion – include the same images that would be felt in the physical situation. However, try to avoid debilitative emotions (e.g. fear, panic). For example, a dancer imaging a well executed routine

- Perspective – the imagery perspective can be first person (through your own eyes) or third person (like watching yourself on video)

- Imagery can be used at any time, whether it is pre-performance, during performance, or post-performance. It can even be the last thing you do before bed. Try to incorporate PETTLEP imagery into your sport routine and see if you notice the benefits!

Floating on a cloud script

Find a relaxed position – lying down is best – and get comfortable.

First, relax your body. Starting at the top of your head, allow a feeling of relaxation to begin. Feel the relaxation grow with each breath you take.

Inhale... Relax your scalp and head.... exhale.... Let the tension go away even more....

Breathe in relaxation.... Feeling your face and ears relax... exhale all the tension.

 Inhale.... Feeling your neck and shoulders relaxing.... As you exhale, let all the muscles of your neck and shoulders release their hold, relaxing fully....

Breathe in, feeling the relaxation continuing to your arms and hands... Breathe out the tension....

Breathe in relaxation.... Allowing your chest and upper back to relax.... release the tension as you exhale.

Inhale, feeling the relaxation flowing through your middle back and your stomach.... Release the muscles of your back and stomach as you breathe out....

As you take another breath, feel your lower back relaxing. Feel the tension leaving as you release the breath.

Breathe in, relaxing your hips and pelvic area... Breathe out, relaxing even further.

As you inhale, feel your upper legs relaxing... Let the muscles of your legs completely let go as you breathe out.

Take another breath drawing in relaxation, all the way down to your feet. Let your legs go limp as you exhale.

Continue to breathe in relaxation, and breathe out tension.

Now you are feeling deeply relaxed. Deeply relaxed and calm...

Begin to create a picture in your mind. Imagine that you are floating on a soft, fluffy white cloud.

Feel the surface beneath you becoming softer... more cloud-like... Feel the cloud rising out of the surface you are on, surrounding you in it's protective support... soon you are floating on just the cloud...

Let it rise a little further, taking you with it.... see the walls and ceiling around you disappearing as you float into the sunny sky.... Drifting on the cloud.

Feel the cloud beneath you. It is soft but supportive. Feel the cloud supporting your whole body.

Notice each place where your body is touching the cloud. Feel how soft and comfortable the cloud is. It is almost like floating in the air.

Notice how the cloud feels. It might be a little bit cool, and moist, like fog. Your body is warm, very warm and heavy, and sinking into the cloud. It is a wonderful feeling.

Start to create an image in your mind of where you are. You might be floating just barely above the ground. You can choose to float wherever you like. The sky above you is bright blue, sunny, and inviting. You are warm and comfortable, warmed by the sun's rays shining down peacefully.

There are some other clouds in the sky, floating gently. See them lazily passing by, far above.

Your cloud can float wherever you choose. If you enjoy being high up, you can let your cloud rise into the sky. It is very safe. Very calming. Very relaxing. You are so relaxed. Floating on a cloud. Supported gently but firmly by your cloud. Surrounded by the cloud's protective embrace.

See the sights around you as you are floating on a cloud. Imagine the green grass below, gently blowing in the wind. The grass recedes further away as you rise into the sky. From here, the grass looks like a soft carpet, the wind creating gentle waves in the grass as if it were water.

What else do you see? Perhaps some trees, their leaves whispering in the gentle breeze. You can gaze down on housetops, country roads, hills.

From this amazing vantage point, you can see around you 360 degrees. The horizon stretches out in a complete circle around you.

Notice in the distance how the hills appear almost blue.... slightly hazy.

How does it feel to be floating on a cloud? Does it sway gently, like a boat on almost-smooth water? Does it drift in the breeze? Can you feel the movement as you gently float on the cloud? You feel so comfortable.... So relaxed.... Floating on a cloud....

(pause)

Continue floating on a cloud, enjoying the sights around you. Up here, the air is so clean.

Look up at the beautiful sky. The clouds that were high above you are much closer now. Some are so close you can almost touch them. Not quite.

Continue floating on a cloud, drifting, rising even higher if you wish.

The ground below you looks like a patchwork quilt. Green grass. Golden fields. Yellow. Brown. Blue patches of water... rivers and lakes.

See the clouds around you. You are even able to look down on some clouds. See the shadows they make on the ground below. Can you see the shadow from your cloud? See how the shadow drifts silently across the ground below.

Relax and luxuriate in this beautiful scene, floating on a cloud. You are so close now to another cloud above you, that if you reach out, you can touch it. What would it feel like?

You can even rise higher still and pass right through the clouds above. Feel the mist on your cheeks as you rise through the clouds. Around you it is a glorious white, like fog... the sun shines through just enough that the white all around you glows vibrantly.

You rise higher still, suddenly coming through the clouds and into the open, dazzling sunlight shining on your face. The sky above is brilliant blue.

You can look down on the cloud you just passed, and see the white, fluffy peaks and valleys of this cloud below. It looks like perfect snow. Looking around below you it is as if you are above a land of snow. The sun shines brightly.

Lay back on your cloud, floating... Relaxing.... Floating on a cloud.

Feel the cloud beneath you... Still supporting you smoothly and comfortably.

Take your cloud wherever you wish.... Higher, lower, side to side... Drift wherever you want to go.

Enjoy the sights around you, as you are flying wherever you wish....

(pause)

Continue floating on a cloud, relaxing... Imagine wherever it is you would like to go. Your cloud can take you there.

Maybe you want to float above the mountains, drifting above their rocky peaks.

Perhaps you would like to drift along the coast of the ocean, watching the waves crashing to shore.

Maybe you would like to float through the city, drifting in and out among buildings and watching the cars below.

You can travel anywhere you wish. You can look down on forests... the countryside... even your own home... Float wherever you like.

(pause)

Enjoy the sights around you. Enjoy floating on a cloud. You are so relaxed... so peaceful...

(pause)

Now it is time to return to your day. Let your cloud take you there. Feel your cloud flying through the sky, back to where you need to go. Let your cloud lower you down, back toward the ground. Float

back to where you were when you started this visualization. Let the cloud meld with the bed, chair, or whatever surface you are on. Feel the cloud slowly disappear as the real surface becomes more solid beneath you.

Notice now your surroundings. Gradually come back to the present. Feel the surface beneath you. Hear the sounds around you. Become more and more aware and alert. Continue to rest for a few moments longer but open your eyes and look around. See your surroundings.

Wiggle your fingers and toes, feeling your body reawaken. Shrug your shoulders. Move your arms and legs. Turn your head. When you are ready, you can return to your day, feeling refreshed and alert after your journey floating on a cloud.

Lowering anxiety script

Start by getting comfortable, finding a position seated or lying down where you can relax. Place your arms at your sides, and keep your legs uncrossed to improve blood flow.

As you begin this generalized anxiety relaxation, you might want to close your eyes, or focus your gaze on one spot in the room.

Take a deep breath in.... filling your lungs.... and now breathe out, emptying your lungs completely.

Breathe in again, through your nose.... now blow the air out through your mouth.

Breathe in..... and out.

In..... out.

Keep breathing slowly like this, fully emptying your lungs with each breath.

Your deep breathing calms and relaxes you... allows your body to relax, to get just the right amount of oxygen, and to feel calm.

There is nothing you need to be doing right now, and no where you need to be, except here, relaxing, enjoying this time for yourself. Enjoying this generalized anxiety relaxation. You deserve this time and need this time to function at your best. This time of relaxation will allow you to be as calm and healthy as possible. This generalized anxiety relaxation is productive, healthy time. You are looking after your health with this generalized anxiety relaxation.

As you continue to breathe slowly and comfortably, turn your attention to your body. Notice how you are feeling physically. Without trying to change anything, simply become aware of the sensations in your body.

All you need to do right now in this generalized anxiety relaxation is observe. However, you are feeling right now is okay. None of your physical sensations are cause for concern, though some of them may be unpleasant because they are signs of built up stress. Just notice how you are feeling, noticing any signs of stress and tension you may have without trying to change anything right now.

Scan your body, beginning at the top of your head, and moving downward. Turn your attention to your head. Observe.

Moving your attention downward, to the level of your eyes, nose, chin.... down to your shoulders. Noticing each area, observing how your body feels.

Keep scanning, gradually moving down your body. How does your upper body feel? Take note of any areas of tension.

Nearing the center of your body, at the level of your stomach. How is this part of your body feeling? Keep observing your physical state. Continue to scan your body, moving the focus of your attention downwards.

Reaching the level of your hips... keep observing and moving your attention down. How does this part of your body feel? Notice any tension, without trying to change anything.

Reaching the level of your knees... how does this area of your body feel? Keep scanning.... all the way down to your feet.

Take a moment now to scan your whole body, noticing how your body feels as a whole. Where is your body the most tense?

Focus intently on this one area of tension.... and imagine the muscles here letting go of their hold, becoming loose, becoming relaxed.... letting the tension go. Releasing the tension bit by bit, until this area relaxes. Feel the tension softening... feel the muscles as they loosen, lengthen.... warming and relaxing, as if they are melting into relaxation.

Notice where your body is the most relaxed. How does the relaxation feel? Imagine that this relaxation is warm and tingly, moving.... growing... spreading to relax other parts of your body.

Feel your body becoming more relaxed as the area of relaxation grows as you continue this generalized anxiety relaxation.

Imagine that the air you are breathing is pure relaxation. Imagine that the oxygen you breathe in is relaxation, and the carbon dioxide you breathe out is tension. The air exchange is an efficient relaxation system. Feel the relaxation as you take it in through your nose and relax your body, adding to the area of relaxation already there. Expel your body's tension, breathing it out through your mouth.

Continue to exchange tension and relaxation. Continue the generalized anxiety relaxation exercise.

Feel the relaxed area getting bigger as you breathe more and more relaxation into your body. Breathe out tension and feel the tension getting smaller.

Breathe in relaxation, and breathe out tension.

Each breath in adds to the relaxation, a full breath more of relaxation is added to your body. Each breath out removes any tension.

Keep breathing in relaxation, and breathing out tension. More and more relaxed with each breath.

(pause)

Soon the areas of tension are very small. Your breathing can eliminate them entirely. Imagine breathing out any last bits of tension.

You are feeling so calm... so relaxed... breathing in relaxation, and breathing out relaxation.

Breathe in... relax

Breathe out... relax

Keep breathing smoothly and regularly, relaxing more and more deeply with each breath.

Now as you continue this generalized anxiety relaxation, scan your body again, noticing how your body feels now.

(pause)

Imagine that your body is made of caramel, or chocolate, or some other solid that can be melted. Right now, your body is like a solid, hard piece of caramel.

Imagine a feeling of warmth, starting in your hands and feet, that starts to soften the caramel that your body is made of.

Soon your hands and feet are soft... getting softer and more liquid. The warmth spreads throughout your body... from your hands, up your arms. Feel your arms melting, softening. It is a pleasant feeling.... so relaxing.

Feel the warmth as it continues up from your feet, up your legs. Notice your legs softening, as if they are melting to a completely relaxed state.

Feel the core of your body as the warmth coming from your arms and legs meets at your stomach. Feel your core relaxing, melting.

Imagine that your whole body is very soft.... like caramel that has melted and is soft and stretchy.

Simply rest, enjoying this relaxation. Floating.... relaxing.

(pause)

Focus now on your thoughts. Notice your calm thoughts. Enjoying this relaxation. Enjoying this generalized anxiety relaxation exercise.

See how you can focus your thinking to a state of complete calm by meditating on a single word. Meditate now on the word "relax" by mentally saying "relax" each time you breathe in, and each time you breathe out.

Breathe in, "relax"

Breathe out, "relax"

Continue breathing, saying in your mind "relax" with each breath in and again with each breath out. Continue this generalized anxiety relaxation.

(pause)

It is normal for your thoughts to wander, and as they do, just focus again on the word "relax." Keep repeating this word as you enjoy the generalized anxiety relaxation exercise.

(pause)

Focus all of your attention on simply repeating the word "relax."

Keep repeating this word, noticing how you are completely relaxed and calm, drifting in a pleasant state of relaxation.

Now, simply allow your mind to drift. You don't need to focus on anything at all. Just rest, and relax, enjoying this pleasant state you are in.

(pause)

Keep relaxing for a while longer, enjoying this pleasant, calm feeling. Continue the generalized anxiety relaxation exercise. You can relax any time you need to take a break. This feeling of calm that you have right now can stay with you even after you are fully awake and alert. You can keep with you the feeling of calm and confidence, and your muscles can remain relaxed. You can feel calm as you go about the activities of your life, even when you encounter stress.

In fact, the next time you start to feel anxious, you might even remember this moment of relaxation and find that the anxiety goes away. You may even keep a relaxed feeling with you as you encounter stressful situations. Imagine the confidence and composure you will have as you face stressors while still feeling calm.

Take another deep breath in, breathing in relaxation .... and breathe out, emptying your lungs completely.

Keep breathing smoothly and calmly. You can breathe like this any time, drawing in relaxation, and breathing out the tension that accumulates through the day. Every day, your breathing can relax you, making you strong and resilient, able to cope with the stresses that come your way.

(pause)

Now it is time to finish this generalized anxiety relaxation exercise. Your energy can increase until you are fully awake, alert, and energetic.

Take a moment to wake up your body and mind so you can return to your usual activities.

Rub your hands together, feeling your hands and arms waking up.

Move your feet up and down, waking up your feet and legs.

Sit quietly for a moment with your eyes open, reorienting yourself to your surroundings.

Stretch if you want to, allowing your body to reawaken fully.

When you are fully awake and alert, you can return to your usual activities, feeling wonderful.

Imagery scripts: http://www.innerhealthstudio.com