



Pre-Performance Routines

Routines build consistency and predictability. They establish physical and mental foundations for performance and leave less to variability (weather, customer responses, the competition, etc.)

An actor does not go on stage without getting into character? A musician or singer does not go on stage without warming up. Yes, in order to be convincing you need to get into character. Where does the “eye of the tiger” come from? Business men and women just like athletes need to get into the right mindset. Think of the routines a basketball player goes through before shooting free throws. Or think of a batter in the on-deck circle or at bat. Do you notice patterns? It is not only physical movements that are patterns. If you were to go inside their heads there are thought patterns as well.

For someone to behave confidently, what body posture do they have? What do they say to themselves? You can bet that the best of them are telling themselves “I can do it!” “They control for now...” “I’m coming back.” How do they look?

If you want to be depressed: take on depressed behaviors to act or even become depressed. Would you know a depressed person if you saw or heard them? What body posture would they have? What tone of voice? What do they say to themselves? Can you imagine their self-talk?

When you go into a situation that you want to perform consistently or in which results are critical, you need to develop a routine that prepares you to enter that situation in an optimal state. That is a pre-performance routine. By situation, I mean it could be a meeting, negotiation, reprimand of a staff member, giving or receiving a performance appraisal, asking for a raise from your boss, interviewing for a job, performing a critical task, making a presentation to a large group or anything that may require you to be on top of your game.

Here are key elements to determine:

- * How much time do you need to center yourself, and put the rest of the day’s events on the side? It is different for different people. It is difficult to flop from one activity to the next that require different skill sets, or focus.
- * What specifically do you do to let-go of everything other than the task at hand? Perhaps a few deep breaths work for you or standing



Not sure where to start? Look for mentors, coaches and role models. Ask others, then formulate your own pre-performance routines. A business coach who specializes in mental training for optimal performance can be ideal for helping with this.

Set the stage for success. Get the right Mindset!

"Just focus!" "You don't focus enough." "You're not paying attention!" "I can't seem to stay focused." These are just some comments you hear in the work place. (Maybe even you have uttered them!)

Have you ever thought to yourself that if you could only focus better at a task you would perform better? An entire body of knowledge exists to help us understand how to maintain or improve the ability to focus. Sports psychology has developed both theoretical and practical applications to improve the ability to focus.

If you would like to learn more about the ability to focus, here is a very good start:

[Focus! Mental Strategies for Zone Concentration](#) by Patrick

up and stretching or performing a mind-clearing exercise will do.

* If the situation is a task which requires total concentration, for instance, what do you do to set the stage? Check the arrangement of your work area or desk, put the phone on hold, and put a do-not-disturb sign up, etc.

* How do you see the event unfolding? What is your plan? Follow? Lead? Listen? You need to have a game plan or road map. Do not leave to chance. Know where you want to go.

* What will you do when or if things go badly at some point in the situation? What will you say to yourself to get you through? You can take time-outs, even in business. Excuse yourself and go to the bathroom if you must.

* What mental tactics have you prepared for dealing with unexpected responses or situations? Have Plan B available.

* How will you act entering the situation, during the situation and wrapping-up the situation? Know what you want to project. Monitor your tone of voice, rate of speech and delivery.

* What affirmations or self-talk do you have about the situation? Positive behaviors follow-positive thoughts.

You must rehearse your pre-performance routine. It won't suddenly dawn on you to think a certain way in the middle of a situation. Therefore, you must practice it. How do you want to think in a tough spot? What do you want to say to yourself?

J. Cohn Ph.D. is an excellent, succinct and practical e-book on the ability to focus.

You can order it online at www.peaksports.com.